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Yes, How the left can sort itself out: see pages 5-7 antisemitism is a real problem

The decision of Momentum to remove their endorsement of Campaign for Labour Party Democracy secretary, Pete Willsman from the #JC9 slate for Labour National Executive Committee has escalated the ongoing row in Labour over antisemitism in its ranks.

The problem of antisemitism in Labour and on the wider left is real, it is just that many Labour members do not recognise it.

Primarily the left needs a deeper understanding what is involved in antisemitism on the left. The Willsman affair illustrates some of the problems of lack of recognition and the obstacles involved in dealing with those.

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Sacha Ismail examines the results of the Pakistan elections.

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Germany's new left populism

Dale Street examines the politics behind the new Aufstehen movement in Germany.

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The SKWAWKBOX
@skwawkbox
Pertinent and frightening...
The Jewish 'War Against Corbyn' risks
bringing real antisemitism to Britain
po.st/vO9K7k via @robertcohen2

Israel owns the Senate
the Congress and the executive branch
but who owns Israel?

The Rothschild family who has been creating almost all of the world's money at interest for a couple hundred years. They have used usury alongside modern Israel as a imperial instrument to take over the world and all of it's resources, including you and I ... and if you have a problem with that, you're an "anti-semitic"

This is done only by Talmud Jews. Talmud Jews are parasites! They also believe any child over 3 years old that isn't a Jew should be treated like a parasite, they believe it is okay to even rape that child because it's worthless. To treat a non jew decently means that you are as bad as them. All Talmuds need executing!

Black Pride
4 Jul at 17:29 • Q
This is just sickening

JEWISH RITUAL
THEY DRINK BLOOD



22 mins • The Guardian •
Apparently Electoral Commission states that Watson received £50,000+ from Jewish donors. At least Judas only got 30 pieces of silver.

International Red Cross Report Confirms the Holocaust of Six Million Jews is a Hoax:



International Red Cross Report Confirms the Holocaust of Six Million Jews is a Hoax:

What do you know abt Jews? They've got big noses and support spurs lol
vivicckil @vivicckil - 18 Feb 2017
vivicckil @vivicckil - 13 Aug 2014
@KozalBoof @RealLove @hasantnt point abt Jews is that they OCCUPY Palestine. Used to live together, now slaughter the oppressed.
vivicckil @vivicckil - 23 Aug 2015
That awkward moment when you realize you've taken this whole 'I'm a jew' charade too far.
vivicckil @vivicckil - 2 Aug 2014
Who is the Zionist God? I am starting to think it may be Hitler. @FreePalestine



Gaza Boat Convoy
@gazaboatconvoy
Labour Jewish Movement calls for Hamas and Hezbollah ban thejc.com/news/uk-news/l... A party within a party. A 5th column. #IsraelLobby
Jewish Labour Movement calls for Hamas ...
thejc.com

Gaza Boat Convoy
@gazaboatconvoy
London's green spaces must be preserved. No holocaust memorial.
telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/1... plz sign & RT
@_moobs_ @SplottDave @Lara_Collins11

Gaza Boat Convoy
@gazaboatconvoy
Replying to @CoolAntiZionist and @LeonFestinger
Must still be plenty shekels to be wrung out of memory of the holocaust.
#holocaustindustry
5:47 pm - 05 Mar 17
1 Retweet

Gaza Boat Convoy
@gazaboatconvoy
Replying to @MLKstudios
Brainwashing and conditioning. I had it at school with the holocaust indoctrination program.
7:12 pm - 12 Nov 16 from South East,



Analysing the left's anti-imperialism

Paul Hampton reviews *Indefensible: democracy, counterrevolution, and the rhetoric of anti-imperialism* by Rohini Hensman.

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Join Labour!

Labour members
push for conference
vote on Brexit

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Pakistan: Khan is no alternative

By Sacha Ismail

Pakistan can be added to the list of countries whose politics have been dramatically shaken up in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.

The Movement for Justice party — PTI from the initials of its Urdu name — led by former cricketer and multi-millionaire Imran Khan, got 0.8 percent of the vote in 2002, boycotted the elections in 2008 and rose to 16.9% in 2013. This time it got 31.9% and a near majority in the national assembly, with Khan looking set to become prime minister.

The traditional parties of the Pakistani ruling class, the openly conservative Pakistan Muslim League and the supposedly left-wing Pakistan People's Party, are in crisis. The extreme corruption associated with both is part of what has given the PTI its appeal.

There is enthusiasm for Khan and his movement among some

Pakistani-background activists in the Labour Party, including some on the left. Khan has compared himself to Jeremy Corbyn, citing a desire for "economic justice" and opposition to US foreign policy, particularly in Afghanistan and the bordering areas of Pakistan. (The Counterfire group has published an article virtually hailing Khan — see bit.ly/2vMhplU.) But the PTI is not a left-wing party in any sense. It is a tightly controlled top-down organisation, almost a personality cult; a neo-liberal force; and in many respects something worse.

Having used rhetoric about an "Islamic welfare state" to gain support, Khan's spokespeople are now floating the privatisation of most of Pakistan's remaining state-owned companies — for instance, Pakistan International Airlines, previously saved by from being sold off after a struggle by its workers and whose privatisation the PTI opposed a few months ago! This is part of an at-

tempt to get a bailout from the IMF, with all the obvious economic and social consequences.

Moreover, Khan, though he still trades off a liberal and cosmopolitan image in the West, has over the years moved further and further down the road of religious conservatism, working with Islamists, defending the country's blasphemy laws and displaying indifference to the persecution of religious minorities.

ISLAMISM

Alarming, though the traditional far-right Islamist alliance MMA didn't do that well in the election, a new even more extreme group raising the slogan "Death to the Unbelievers", Tehreek e-Labbaik, leapt to 2.2 million votes, over four percent.

Last but not least, Khan is the preferred prime minister candidate of Pakistan's powerful army and security services, who also cooperate with some Islamists, and there

seems to be evidence of low-level but significant election-tampering in his favour.

Khan and the PTI may help the Pakistani ruling class and political elite to establish greater independence from the US and revamp their economy on the backs of the country's workers, peasants and poor, getting out of the impasse in a way the more evidently corrupt old parties could not.

Despite the rise of political Islam, and the mainstream's accommodation to it, there are also secularising and progressive trends in Pakistani society. This was the first time three non-Muslim national assembly members, Hindus representing the Pakistan People's Party, were elected. Women voted in large numbers, including in areas where they have previously been afraid

to. Despite the religious conservative nature of Khan's politics, many seem to have voted PTI for essentially liberal and anti-sectarian reasons, particularly young people. Pakistan also has a left and labour movement, though weak and beleaguered. As far as I can tell one socialist was elected to the national assembly, Ali Wazir, a member of the Struggle group who leads a Pashtun movement fighting for the rights of victims of the 'war on terror'. Wazir has had numerous family members killed by the Taliban.

There are plenty of people in Pakistan we can support, and they need solidarity.



Wildcat strike against racist boss

By Gemma Short

On Tuesday 31 July Indianapolis welder Antoine Dangerfield filmed what became a viral video, watched over 2 million times in two days, of a wildcat strike by Latino construction workers building a new UPS hub.

In the video and in a subsequent interview with Jacobin magazine Dangerfield explains that some Latino workers, working for a different contractor but in the same hub were ordered to go home (effectively sacked) by a white boss he calls racist.

Dangerfield explained to Jacobin that workers had disobeyed an order from this boss: "We have safety meetings, and we usually have a translator [for Spanish speakers] because there are so many. On Tuesday, we had a safety meeting, and like I said, the Mexi-

cans don't really like [the safety coordinator]. He asked one of the Mexicans to come up and translate. He didn't wanna do it. [The coordinator] got mad, real red-faced. Next thing you know, he dismissed the meeting. So he's walking around just sending them home, trying to fire them. So he sent like five or six of them home."

"So the Hispanics got together and were like, 'Nah. We got families and kids. We're not about to let these dudes just do whatever.' So they took a stand."

The video shows the workers walking out, Dangerfield estimates more than 100 walked off the job. The sight of the workers all walking off site affects Dangerfield whose commentary describes the sense of power. After the Latino workers have walked out Dangerfield's video tours the empty construction site — "Ain't no grinding,

cutting, welding — this mother-fucker is dead-ass quiet. The Mexicans shut this motherfucker down."

The safety coordinator has apparently been sacked.

Dangerfield was also sacked for posting the video. He also says the company offered him \$250 to take the video down, but by that point it had been shared beyond it's original posting. A GoFundMe has been set up to support Dangerfield, who has a son.

• **Original video:**

https://youtu.be/Ykb6Nk9_PjI

• **GoFundMe:**

<https://www.gofundme.com/z9h8cc-support-antoine-fired-4-strike-vid>

• **Jacobin interview:**

<https://jacobinmag.com/2018/08/wildcat-strike-indianapolis-shut-down>

Ryanair Must Change

By Charlotte Zalens

Ryanair pilots in Ireland, Sweden and Belgium will strike for 24-hours on Friday 10 August.

The strike is part of an ongoing dispute as pilots are demanding a fair and transparent approach to transfers between different bases. On 25 July Ryanair escalated the dispute by threatening to sack 100 pilots and 200 cabin crew, or transfer them to Poland.

Pilots based in Ireland, and members of FORSA union, have already struck for four periods of 24 hours since 12 July. They may

be joined by pilots based in Germany and the Netherlands after a poll by the Association of Dutch Pilots saw 99.5% of members in favour of strikes.

Ryanair only recognised unions in December 2017, in what was a huge victory for workers at the airline, and workers are taking the opportunity to push back. Since then workers have struck several times in various countries across Europe.

On 25-26 July cabin crew in Belgium, Portugal and Spain struck, and cabin crew in Italy on 25 July.

Cabin crew are demanding a



variety of concessions on employment practices, including the right to be paid into bank accounts in their own countries rather than being forced to open an Irish bank account.

Mick Woods 1954-2018



By Martin Thomas

Mick Woods died on 19 July at the age of 63. He was an activist of the tendency which is now Workers' Liberty from the mid 70s to 1984, and remained a committed socialist until his death.

As all the tributes since his death have testified, Mick combined commitment with wit, critical thinking, and unpretentiousness. The tribute from Roger Welch, an ex-activist of the same vintage, says it well: "a genuine revolutionary but also one with an irreverent sense of humour and healthy cynicism regarding the sort of lefties who reek of self importance".

Mick went with the group around Alan Thornett in the split we had in early 1984. Although he largely agreed with the majority on the big-picture political issues then, he took sides because he disagreed with our organisational measures to resolve the "cold split" which had developed.

That parting of the ways was definitive. The group with which he had split scattered — a remnant is now in Socialist Resistance —

and Mick moved to Denmark, where he was a member until his death of the small "Mandelite" group SAP, part of the Red Green Alliance in that country.

I made contact with him again only in 2016, when another ex-activist from his time told me that Mick was very ill, and indicated how I might be able to contact him. I traced an address and sent Mick a get-well card and, later, a copy of one of our books.

Early this year I heard back from Mick, sounding more hopeful: "a very belated note to thank you and Sean [Matgamna] for the get-well cards you sent me about a year ago. I was very sick with endocarditis and then reacted very badly to the antibiotics... forgot about the cards until I dug them out of a pile of papers..."

"I have moved to a reasonably handicap-friendly pensioner flat last October and have my house up for sale. Hope all is good with you. Pass this on to Sean..."

Even at the worst, Mick did not give up. He fought for socialism, according to his best understanding, with all the energy he had and all the years he was allowed.

Danger posed by Robinson retrial

By Keith Road

Far-right leader Tommy Robinson has been released from prison after he had his conviction for contempt of court quashed. The Court of Appeal has ordered a new trial.

This will be a major boost for Robinson's supporters and his own profile. He now awaits a new hearing on the charge of contempt of court.

Always prepared to offend, Robinson compared his time in prison to being in Guantanamo Bay, claimed he was moved from Hull to Onley, a prison with a 30% Muslim population and put in a cell opposite the "Prison Mosque." No such "mosque" exists.

As his complaint letter to the prison states, what Robinson was really suffering from was the lack of a TV, which, he claimed, was "mental torture."

The most worrying thing about these latest developments is how they embolden not just his supporters in the UK but the growing populist far-right network across Europe and North America.

Following his release, Robinson spoke to Tucker Carlson from Fox

News who unsurprisingly provided no challenge to any of his statements, wished him luck and warned US viewers that wrongful arrests, such as that of Robinson, could happen in the US, if they were not vigilant.

Robinson thanked Republican Congressman as well as the US ambassador to the UK for speaking out on his behalf. As well as having the support of figures like Steve Bannon and UKIP, Robinson can now count on the backing of an ultra-conservative think-tank the Middle East Forum which has ploughed money into the demonstrations in his support.

While he was in prison Robinson's supporters — who for the time being count as most of the organised far right — had promised to organise a rally every month. It is not clear what they will do now, or if Robinson will himself appear at further demonstrations.

Whether Robinson is ultimately re-imprisoned or not the threat of his supporters and the growing influence of the far right both online and in the streets cannot be ignored.

Despite the turnout on the last pro-Robinson protest in Whitehall



being smaller than previously they easily outnumbered the anti-fascists. Without the police presence the left and labour movement contingents would have been driven from the streets.

It is incumbent on the entire labour movement particularly the trade unions and Labour Party to do all they can to mobilise their members onto the street.

This means being disciplined about how we organise and having properly stewarded mobilisations that are able to protect and defend our demonstrations.

Anti-fascism also means educating our movement; we have to go

beyond shouting "Nazi scum". At the same time we have to counter the idea among some on the left that the working-class people who attend demonstrations in support of Robinson, are just politically disenfranchised or only racist by mistake.

Unions and the Labour Party must politically educate their members on the significance of the rise of the far right and unite around political demands for jobs, homes, freedom of movement and an end to austerity. That is the only way to undercut the social malaise on which the far right build support.

Protests against Serco attacks on Asylum seekers' housing

By Ann Field

On the last Friday in July Serco emailed less than a dozen public authorities and NGOs in Glasgow to inform them that as of the following Monday it would be implementing a policy of changing the locks on the accommodation of asylum-seekers who had been refused asylum.

It is unlikely that the timing of the announcement was coincidental. The Scottish and UK Parliaments were both in recess, as too was Glasgow City Council.

At a rate of up to ten a week, 300 asylum-seekers — many of whom would be in the process of appealing but still awaiting written confirmation of this, or, alternatively, might be in the process of lodging a fresh claim — would be given seven days notice of the lock change.

Asylum-seekers at risk of being put out onto the streets include attempted suicides, asylum-seekers with suicidal ideations, pregnant women, and couples or lone parents with children.

The Serco statement claimed that the new policy — which is not entirely new, given that it has previously carried out some lock changes — had been discussed with Glasgow City Council in the preceding months. The Council denies this.

Confronted with a choice of believing Serco or Glasgow City Council, it is difficult to decide which is the less credible.

Serco's announcement triggered a wave of protests. Some 500 attended a city-centre rally on 31 July. And on 3 and 4 August hundreds attended further protests outside the Immigration Service offices in Govan.

A loose campaigning network emerged in response to Serco's announcement, bringing together the Living Rent campaign, which is best placed for organising physical opposition to evictions, refugee organisations, and political parties and activists.

With the exception of the Tories, all political parties have condemned Serco's announcement. Glasgow Labour and SNP MPs have pledged to turn up at the homes of asylum-seekers facing eviction and help to physically prevent the evictions from going ahead.

Around 10 Glasgow Housing Associations rent out accommodation to Serco so that the latter can use it for asylum-seekers. A number of them have told Serco that they will not allow any changes to the "fixtures and fittings" in the flats they are renting out. This covers lock changes.

The Scottish Labour Party is backing the anti-evictions campaign as well. Its Glasgow office has sent out emails urging members to turn up to the protests which have been held, and to register online in order to be told of mobilisations to stop attempted evictions.

This should be ABC for Con-



Protest in George Square against Serco

stituency Labour Parties (CLPs) and their members. But years of right-wing domination have hollowed out many Glasgow CLPs, leaving behind only handfuls of activists.

And the success of right-wingers in being selected as Prospective Parliamentary Candidates has created 'conflicting priorities': relate to real conflicts and real campaigns in the real world; or spend Saturday mornings shoving #SNPbad pieces of paper through people's letter-boxes.

The former, apart from being correct in and of itself, is a way to rebuild Labour's base in local communities and among younger people. The latter, so the right wing believes, is a ticket for careerists to a £75,000 a year job in London. And that is not just their priority but their sole concern.

Confronted with a wave of protests, opposition from politicians and Housing Associations,

hostile media coverage, and two legal challenges, Serco was forced to retreat.

Last weekend Serco announced that it was 'pausing' its new policy and that no lock changes would be implemented, nor seven-day notices of lock changes issued, over the following three weeks.

Serco's probable calculation is that the wave of anger will dissipate over those three weeks, allowing them to implement their policy — subject to the outcome of the pending legal challenges — relatively unhindered.

The next three weeks may or may not provide a breathing space. Serco should not be taken at its word. It is therefore vital to maintain the momentum of the campaigning against Serco in order to ensure that they do not attempt to implement their lock change policy in three weeks.

Far right targets socialist bookshop

By Ollie Moore

The socialist bookshop Bookmarks was invaded by far-right activists on Saturday 4 August. The activists threw books, tore up placards and posters, and threatened staff and customers. Fortunately no-one was injured.

The bookshop, which is run by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), is located in Bloomsbury, central London.

The attack appears to be an opportunistic action carried out by protesters returning from a protest against alleged "censorship" of Alex Jones's far-right conspiracy-theory platform "InfoWars". One of those involved was wearing a Donald Trump mask. A video taken by the assailants appears to show them passing the shop and noticing placards in its window condemning Tommy Robinson; they then march into shop chanting "we love Trump", and shouting various insults — including "paedophile lover" — at staff.

Like the attack on anti-fascist activists following an anti-racist counter-counter-demonstration in Westminster on 14 July, this event indicates a new far-right movement, growing in confidence. The event marks a new development, whereby far-right activists emboldened by what they feel to be the burgeoning of their movement have the confidence to openly invade left-wing spaces.

The assailants appear to be linked to the "Make Britain Great Again" campaign, a group attempting to transplant Donald Trump and Steve Bannon's ethno-nationalist "America first" rhetoric to the UK. Their placards, carried from their earlier protest, denounced the BBC as the "British Bolshevik Cult", a classic motif of contemporary fascism which sees all of mainstream socio-political and cultural life as being dominated by what it calls "cultural Marxism", a Jewish plot to impose multicultural values on society.

Bookmarks is holding a solidarity event on Saturday 11 August from 2pm. Workers' Liberty will be present and encourages others to attend. The left and the labour movement must urgently discuss the question of self-defence for our spaces and demonstrations.

Understanding the political nature of this growing movement, and confronting its ethno-nationalism with an unapologetic working-class internationalism and advocacy of free movement, equality, and solidarity is also essential.

What Labour's code of conduct omits

LETTERS

Antisemitism, in Europe anyway, is thousands of years old, and has taken many different forms.

Since the 19th century, it has a “left-wing” variant, in which anticapitalist feeling is directed against Jews as easily-targeted scapegoats for capitalism rather than, or as well as, against the impersonal and relatively-complicated real mechanisms of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

The Stalin regime in the USSR coined (in 1949-53), and a range of groups self-defined as left-wing have promoted (especially since the 1970s), a new sub-variant, in which Israel is demonised as the world's great font of imperialism and racism. “Zionists” are equated with fascists and Nazis.

Older variants of antisemitism still circulate. But most antisemitism today, on the right and the would-be left, is framed by the idea is that the Israeli Jewish nation is a uniquely racist and imperialistic nation which should be conquered and suppressed.

The left-wingers who believe that would reject with horror any “racial” antipathy to Jews, and yet their mental constructs make them hostile to that huge majority of Jews who have some reflex identification with Israel.

The row over the Labour Party National Executive's new code of conduct on antisemitism (bit.ly/as/c-lp) has to be assessed in this political context.

Bill Davies (*Solidarity* 475) argues that criticism of the code is misplaced because “Labour's new guidelines are clearly based on the IHRA guidelines and include all the substantive points (except maybe one)”. I think Bill is wrong. There is justice to the criticism.

The IHRA text (bit.ly/ihra-d) is by no means ideally precise, but the Labour Party

leadership itself has taken it as a point of reference, and so its deliberate exclusions and departures should be scrutinised. Bill concedes that one “substantive point” in the IHRA text is not covered in the Labour Party text:

“Applying double standards by requiring of [Israel] a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation”.

In practice this refers to the commonplace demand on Israel that it accept a “right of return” of some six million Palestinians who have ancestral connections to territory now part of Israel.

This demand is not a democratic one for freedom of movement. It is a demand for the territory in which an Israeli Jewish nation has grown up since 1948 to be given over to some (necessarily non-Israeli) agency which will organise mass resettlement of the Palestinian Arab diaspora. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh explicated it, during the recent Gaza border protests, as the demand that the Israeli Jews retain “not an inch” of the land of pre-1948 Palestine.

The Labour Party text does include the words: “the Jewish people have the same right to self-determination as any other people”. But this is unclear, both because the issue is the rights of the existing Hebrew nation in Israel, not of a worldwide “Jewish people” which is not in fact a political unit, and because “self-determination” is a term with clear meanings in some traditions (including the Marxist tradition) but not necessarily in general usage.

The Labour Party text excludes the IHRA wording which condemns “claim[s] that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour”. To criticise Israel for racist policies is right and proper: implicitly licensed here, however, are claims that the very existence, in whatever form, with whatever policy changes, of any Israeli state, is in and of itself “racist”.



This is a campaign from the right of the Party, but their concerns are real

The words in the Labour Party which Bill describes as “addressing” double standards “in a different way” is:

“It is not racist to assess the conduct of Israel — or indeed of any other particular state or government — against the requirements of international law or the standards of behaviour expected of democratic states (bearing in mind that these requirements and standards may themselves be contentious)”.

These platitudinous words do not “address” the double standard at all.

CRITICISM OF ISRAEL

John Strawson, a former Marxist activist, is now broadly right-wing Labour, and announces that he has quit the Labour Party rather than continue the political fight on this issue. Yet his criticisms are telling:

“Despite the pleadings of the Jewish community, the Labour Party... created a test of antisemitic ‘intent’, not in the IHRA definition...”

“The Labour party leadership claims that the reason for not adopting the full IHRA definition and examples is because it wants to ensure free speech on Israel and Palestine.

“Yet the IHRA definition explicitly says that ‘criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic’.”

The lawyer Stephen Sedley — in an article denouncing Jeremy Corbyn, back in 2016, for backing the IHRA text: bit.ly/s-sed — has claimed that the IHRA text tags “everything other than anodyne criticism of Israel as antisemitic”. But that can be true only if no other country in the world is liable to more-than-anodyne criticism.

Strawson continues: “As a staunch supporter of Palestinian self-determination and an opponent of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory after the 1967 war, I regularly criticise Israeli policy.

“For a period of eleven years I was... a visiting professor teaching at [Birzeit University in the West Bank]... I was there during the worst of the second intifada and I know something about how dreadful the humiliations and oppression of occupation are.

“I agree with the International Court of Justice that the wall that has been built on Palestinian territory is illegal.

“However, I can make all these criticisms

without resorting to antisemitism or calling for the destruction of Israel. In any event antisemitism hardly aids the cause of the Palestinians”.

Likewise David Hirsh's:

“The kind of antisemitism which is now legitimate in the Labour Party is pushed and defended by people who think of themselves as opponents of antisemitism. They have no antisemitic intent and so would not be found antisemitic by a tribunal using the home-made definition. Yet they still ostracise those who oppose antisemitism and they are responsible for a culture which nurtures and licenses antisemitic ways of thinking”.

Of course, much of the denunciation by Jewish community leaders and Labour right-wingers is informed by prior hostility to the recent leftish direction of the Labour Party. They have been spoken out much less against antisemitism in the Blair-Brown Labour Party (bit.ly/060309-dc), or against antisemitism in the Tory Party (a Campaign Against Antisemitism survey shows antisemitic attitudes markedly stronger among Tory than among Labour supporters: bit.ly/as-svy)

They hype it up with talk about “the existential” — existential, no less — “threat to Jewish life in this country that would be posed by a Jeremy Corbyn-led government” (bit.ly/jc-et). They demand “thousands” of expulsions from the Labour Party, a rate incompatible with any proper hearings, and seem largely uninterested in promoting the educational discussion which should be the core of the remedy.

Yet the Labour Party Leader's Office cannot be given the benefit of the doubt as “innocents” trying to improve the IHRA's wording. Powerful in that Leader's Office are Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray.

These are long-time Stalinists and prominent people in the Stop The War Coalition. STW chose to tack onto the mass protests against the US invasion of Iraq the sponsorship of the British offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood and the slogan “Free Palestine”, deliberately vague but given bite by placards on the marches adapting the “Keep Britain Tidy” graphic to show a Star of David being binned.

There is good reason to be suspicious about their omissions and additions.

Martin Thomas, north London

A terrain of struggle

I agreed with much of Omar Raii's article about the political content of football. I'd like to suggest some friendly amendments to his argument.

Firstly, while he is clearly right that nationalism plays into and feeds off tournaments like the World Cup, I'm not convinced that this is as mechanical a relationship as is sometimes suggested. England's unexpectedly brilliant performance doesn't seem to have given any kind of electoral filip for Brexit or the government.

Similarly, despite Emanuel Macron's embarrassing theatrics at the final, France's World Cup win has done nothing to bolster his ratings, despite the French press predicting it would do so. This is because fans are not, in the main, so moronic as to draw their political conclusions from a scoresheet.

Secondly, I think the way the article closes is too passive. He says football is “neither progressive nor reactionary” and that people should “just enjoy it. Or don't”.

I think this phrasing blurs the fact that sport is a terrain of struggle, like any other cultural activity. Cinema or literature don't have an inherent political character either — it depends on the particular film or writing and its social context. Socialists are in favour of art that isn't bigoted or just plain



rubbish, and have ideas about how culture can be made free, democratic and accessible. Socialist football fans should take a similarly activist approach.

Some priorities might be campaigning against bigotry, for the inclusion of women and LGBT people, and for democratic control of our clubs against the oligarchs and gangsters.

I'm sure Omar heartily agrees, but it's worth spelling these things out.

Tom Harris, south London

Yes, antisemitism is a real problem in Labour

By Simon Nelson

The decision of Momentum to remove their endorsement of Campaign for Labour Party Democracy secretary, Pete Willsman, from the #JC9 slate for Labour National Executive Committee has escalated the ongoing row in Labour over antisemitism in its ranks.

Labour's right-wing have gone on the offensive over the issue, attacking Corbyn even after he made significant attempts, and in good faith, to acknowledge the problem. In an interview in the *Observer* on 5 August Tom Watson said Labour faced a "vortex of eternal shame" unless it tackled the antisemitism row. In response some Labour left members created a Twitterstorm campaign to get Watson to resign.

But the problem of antisemitism in Labour and on the left is real, it is just that many Labour members do not recognise it. Primarily the left needs a deeper understanding what is involved in antisemitism on the left. The Willsman affair illustrates some of the problems of lack of recognition and the obstacles involved in dealing with those.

Willsman was dropped because of his rant at a National Executive Committee (NEC) in which he said he had seen no evidence of antisemitism in the Labour Party, despite sitting on the Disputes Panel for many years, and is currently dealing with multiple complaints of antisemitism.

His false assertion that the issue is being driven by Trump supporters in the Jewish community is therefore ludicrous — was he asleep in all these meetings? It was also bound to be seen as implying that almost all of these complaints, if they have come from Jews, were just factional weapons rather than well-founded, evidenced, or perceived concerns.

The incident exposed fractures on the left between Momentum, its supporters, other parts of the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance and the Labour Leader's office.



Pete Willsman was dropped, but how did the left slate get decided in the first place?

That Willsman's comments were made in mid-July and were reflected almost verbatim in a written report Willsman himself circulated immediately after the NEC meeting. Then a conveniently leaked recording came out just after NEC ballot papers. That is now standard operating procedure by the Labour right. Ever since Corbyn was elected as leader segments of NEC meetings have been leaked, the press have been briefed during meetings and no doubt many audio recordings have been made. The right-wing in Labour continues to fight for control.

NEC members should not accept being secretly recorded but nonetheless it has become a fact of life. In addition, we the *want* the content of these meetings to be publicly available. Ironically, Willsman is one of only two constituency NEC members who writes regular reports of the meetings thus providing some information of their proceedings. Publicly accessible minutes with clear records of decisions made would undermine the prac-

tice of secret recordings almost immediately.

It is galling that the comments Willsman made, and documented in his report, only garners a response from Momentum and others when it hits the mainstream media. We don't know for sure because there is no record of attendance at the NEC meeting in question, but five other members of the current Momentum-backed slate may have been there, and heard Willsman speak.

What did they say to Willsman at the time?

So there are divisions within the slate, as on the left, on the issue of antisemitism. Rather than explore these politically Momentum, or rather the Officers of Momentum's National Coordinating Group, sought to deal with the issue bureaucratically. The outcry appears to be linked to the tone of Willsman's remarks while the substance of the comments appear not have bothered them.

Darren Williams and Claudia Webbe have backed Ken Livingstone, Yasmin Dar has appeared at commemorations of the Islamic

Revolution in Iran. Like much of the left they have sought to downplay or not recognise the antisemitism that exists in our movement. Not voting for Pete Willsman in this circumstance makes little sense. He has just made widely held views more aggressively and with less concern for the image of the slate.

The Momentum NCG decision to remove Willsman is acknowledged by a social media post; no record of a vote exists and no minutes of any previous meetings of the new NCG are available. But the #JC9 slate was not decided democratically so perhaps they are just being consistent!

We should not accept the lack of democratic process. Future slates should be decided through open discussion and participation rather than backroom stitch ups.

Willsman's apology for offence and his commitment to refer himself to equalities training is a start but it's a long way from him, or others understanding the root of the problem. For example, Momentum welcomes Willsman's apology but make no further comment.

The problem is here is rooted in a lack of common understanding of the specificities of left antisemitism. This is not generally a racialised hostility to Jews as Jews, although that can be an element. It sees Jews or Zionism or Zionists or Israel as more powerful than other groups, nationalisms or states, as organised conspiratorially or with the potential to exert a hidden power.

Stephen Bush in the *New Statesman* argues that the tension on the Labour left has the Leader's Office on one side believing this to be a discussion of how you can acceptably criticise Israel, and those on the other side who think there is a genuine problem with antisemitism, (and the latter group, to be fair, include Momentum's founder Jon Lansman).

A lot of Momentum supporters now believe dropping Willsman is not just a move to save face in response to bad PR but a capitulation to Zionism and that the media are pushing a narrative that antisemitism is a major problem in order to stop *all* criticism of Israel. But this charge could lead into antisemitism — that there is a conspiracy to stop criticism of Israel.

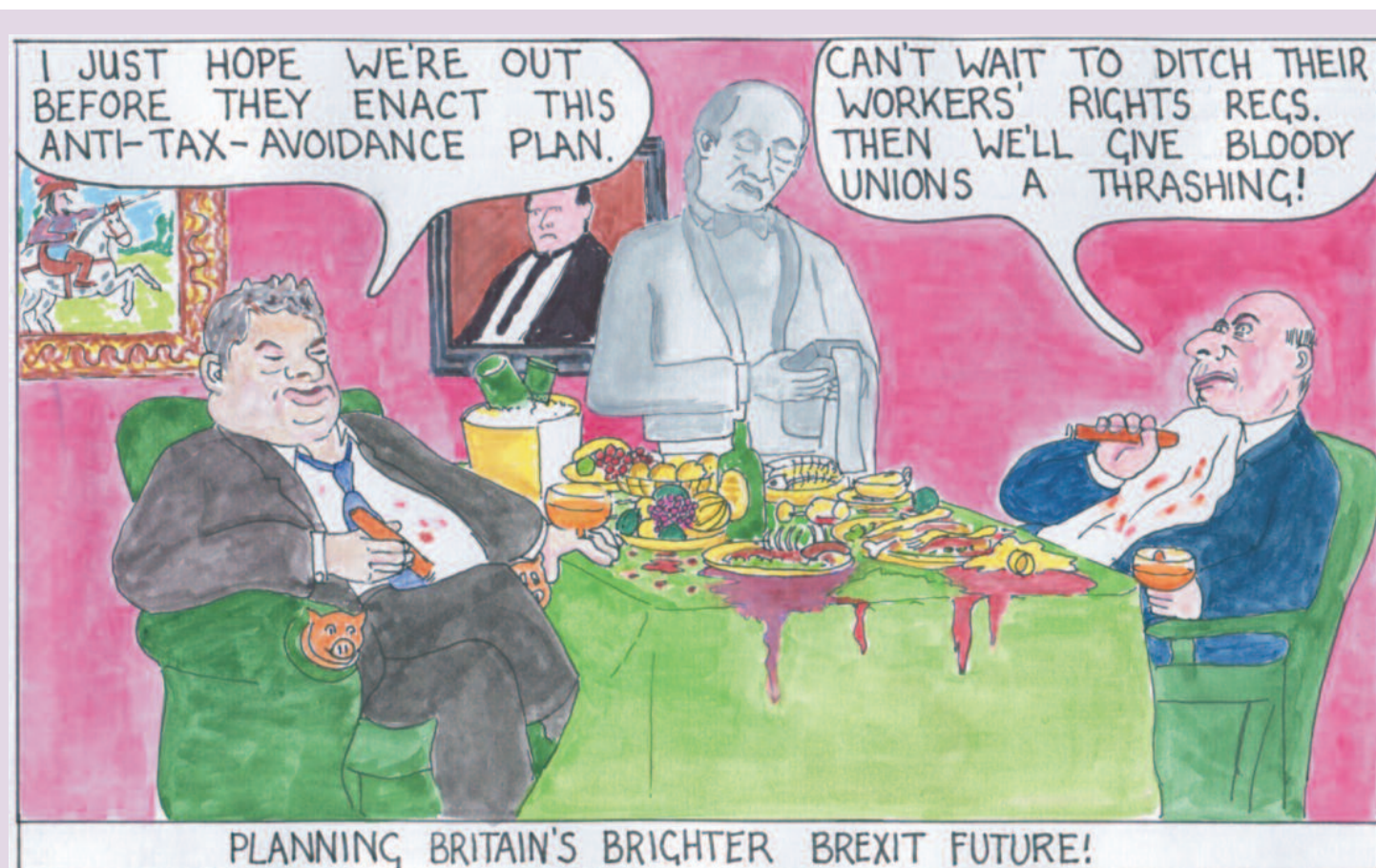
There is a serious need for education and debate to entangle all the issues. Knee-jerk reactions to bad publicity, including Twitterstorms and the like, are not good enough responses to underlying problems.

The left does have a problem with antisemitism — defined as we have above, as a particular form of political hostility which draws on ideas of conspiracy.

Leaving education on this matter to one group — either Jewish Labour Movement of Jewish Voice for Labour or even the Labour Party itself — is not enough.

This isn't about getting people to shut up or attending equalities training. It's essential, in fact, that open argument and differing views about Israel, Zionism, Palestinian solidarity and antisemitism, are shared. Only then can we come to any sort of common understanding of the problems we face and how we can tackle it.

Censorship, expulsions or simple denunciation, whether from Momentum higher ups or from the Labour Party legal department, will not resolve these problems.



The next issue of Solidarity, number 477 will be published on Wednesday 29 August.

Don't leave fighting antisemitism to the right

By Sean Matgamna

There is something dreamlike in the turmoil in and around the Labour Party about antisemitism. Episodes occur — Pete Willsman on the seventy rabbis are pulled out of the memory hole; the meeting Jeremy Corbyn hosted back in 2010...

There are demands for confession, retraction and contrition. Corbyn goes through the motions of responding to the latest revelations, disinterred memory of old events. For sure, his opponents in the party and the Tory press are out to get him.

One of two things then: either they're telling the truth on this matter or they aren't. Either there is a problem of antisemitism in the party or there isn't. Either his critics are lying or exaggerating, and should then be stood up to and faced down. Or they are telling the truth; in which case Corbyn should energetically set about digging out Labour Party antisemitism by the roots.

Corbyn agrees there is a problem. He responds under pressure, moves in the direction his critics are pointing to, but it is as if he cannot understand what the fuss is about. He apologises, retracts, insists that he meant no antisemitism or to be offensive; was not responsible for and did not agree with what other people said, uncontradicted, in his presence.

But everything is low energy, insufficient, ineffectual, can be seen or portrayed as evasive, as lacking conviction. John McDonnell has gently distanced himself from Corbyn.

Corbyn can't get a grip on the situation. His article in the *Guardian* (3 August) is the latest case in point. Much good sentiment and promises. A principled stand on the right to criticise Israel.

And then he defines the situation as one in which the Palestinians have been victims of racism. Losers in a prolonged national conflict, yes. Victims of wrong, yes. But the dis-

inction between racism and nationalism is habitually blurred. There is a false definition of Israel as constitutionally racist (there is an identification of Israel with South Africa). This is one of the main roots of "left" antisemitism.

The truth, I think, is that Corbyn really does not "get it", or "get" enough of it. In the thirty-five years he has been an MP, and earlier, he has lived in a world in which what other people defined as antisemitism was commonplace among much of the ostensible left. Labour Party antisemitism is in large part an infection from the ostensible left.

Corbyn and the people around him and much of the left have been desensitised to antisemitism because it has long been the norm on the ostensible left. He says he is for two states in Israel-Palestine. Some of his political friends do not support a two-state solution. The intense rhetoric against Israel, its demonisation, the comments on events, is always at a higher volume, is more intense, more all-encompassing, more hysterical, more "hate Israel" than is compatible with a two-state solution.

That of course means recognising not only that the Palestinians have a right to their own state, but also that Israel is a legitimate state and has a right to defend itself. The full scale implications of the continual stream of hatred spewed out does not match with the belief that Israel has a right to exist and defend itself. It matches the view that Israel is not a legitimate state and that it has no right of self-defence. The kitsch revolutionary left is saturated with it and it is infectious.

This crisis about antisemitism in the Labour Party was a long time germinating. Take the *Morning Star*, the paper with which Corbyn seems to agree — he hasn't said otherwise — and for which he used to write a column until 2015. Recently it published an article loudly proclaiming that antisemitism in places like Britain will stop if and only if Israel stops ill-treating the Palestinians. It is



a nearly plain statement that antisemitism, and the specially "left" antisemitism, is justified. That is what many of the "left" antisemites think. Under criticism the paper apologised for printing it and retracted, for what that was worth.

The *Morning Star* of course, as the *Daily Worker* during the full scale anti-semitic campaign of Stalin in the years before 1953, fed into the labour movement much that has now become the commonplace wisdom of the ostensible left. For instance the equation of Zionism and Nazism.

POLITICAL SIFTING

The Labour left, the Corbyn surge, will inevitably undergo a political process of sifting, differentiating its political positions. The process of sifting and sorting out on this question is long, long overdue.

It is seriously to be doubted that there are many supporters of the left among the leaders of the Jewish community or the editors of the three newspapers that cater to the Jewish community. On a certain level their general politics will feed into the anti-Corbyn agitation. But they are not in this being right-wing zealots or hypocrites. And there will be some amongst them who play close attention to the left, and its incipient pogromist agitation

against Israel and those who support it. They are not fools. They know that the "Corbyn surge" has put into power in the Labour Party people who are "absolute anti-Zionists", people who are radical anti-Israel zealots and supporters of Arab or Islamic conquest of Israel and the forcible abolition of the Jewish state.

And that there are people, including Jeremy Corbyn, who have peacefully co-existed with such people, and shared platforms and publications with them, instead of denouncing and stigmatising them for the antisemites they are. That for this left, though its sympathy and solidarity is the "good reason", hostility to Israel — any Israel, with any policy on the Palestinians — is a great deal more powerful than support for the Palestinians. That it is autonomous, self-justifying, self-sustaining. That it finds or merges in with earlier strains of antisemitism, of which there are many.

The horrible truth that has to be faced is that large parts of the ostensible — for all practical purposes — is anti-semitic, hostile to Israel's very existence, denying any Israeli right to self-defence. That it endorses and circulates malice-ridden accounts of the history of Zionism and Israel and that from that comes emotion-ridden hostility to Jews who defend Israel and refuse to see it as racism

Corbyn's confusion on anti-Zionism

By Dale Street

There are lots of positives in Jeremy Corbyn's article "I will root antisemites out of Labour (the Guardian 3 August).

Corbyn condemns attempts to belittle concerns expressed by the Jewish community. He acknowledges that Labour has "a real problem" in that trust between the Party and the Jewish community is at a "low ebb". He pledges that Labour will take steps to resolve that problem.

A Labour government will defend all aspects of Jewish life. Antisemitism will be driven out of the Labour Party for good. Education and training will provide party members with a "deeper understanding" of antisemitism.

Further consultation will take place with Jewish community groups about Labour's Code of Conduct on Antisemitism, widely criticised for not have included all International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance examples of antisemitism word-for-word.

But then Corbyn writes: "In the 1970s some on the left mistakenly argued that 'Zionism is racism'. That was wrong, but to assert that 'anti-Zionism is racism' now is wrong too."

This is, at best, confusing on a number of levels.

It is true that in the 1970s some on the left argued that Zionism was a form of racism. It was a canard propagated internationally by the Soviet Union, then in the midst of the most virulently antisemitic state-organised campaign the world had seen since Nazi Germany.

But some on the left have continued to argue that Zionism is a form of racism (or fascism) ever since, and still do so. If it was "mistaken" (a rather charitable expression) to hold that view in the 1970s, it is surely equally "mistaken" to do so today.

So why, so to speak, kick that issue back into the 1970s?

Then there is the statement: "To assert that 'anti-Zionism is racism' now is wrong too."

True, anti-Zionism is not necessarily racism, just as criticism of Israel is not necessarily antisemitic. But the form in which antisemitism expresses itself today is primarily in the guise and language of anti-Zionism and hostility to the realisation of the Zionist project, i.e. the existence of the state of Israel.

Ironically, Corbyn's own article contains a hyperlink to an article by Dave Hirsh (au-



thor of *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*) which makes exactly that point:

"(Those who equate) Zionism = Nazism = racism = apartheid license people to relate to Jews who do not identify themselves as anti-Zionists as racists, Nazis, or defenders of apartheid. To relate to Jews in this way is dangerous. The danger is that it will lead to the emergence of an antisemitic movement."

Most contemporary forms of "anti-Zionism" also incorporate, albeit to differing degrees, traditional antisemitic tropes — rich Jews/Zionists, powerful Jews/Zionists, manipulative Jews/Zionists, etc., etc.

This brand of "anti-Zionism" is not an all-

round antisemitic worldview in which Zionists/Jews are blamed for all the world's evils. But it is an "anti-Zionism" which involves — to use an expression of Dave Hirsh — antisemitic ways of thinking.

Instead of confronting that particular form of antisemitism — the actually existing one in the Labour Party (and in the trade union movement as well) — Corbyn's article retreats into the comfort zone of incontrovertible examples of antisemitism:

"Labour staff have seen examples of Holocaust denial, crude stereotypes of Jewish bankers, conspiracy theories blaming 9/11 on Israel, and even one individual who appeared to believe that Hitler had been misunderstood."

Corbyn gives a commitment in his article to "root out antisemitism in our party" and to "drive antisemitism out of the party for good."

But the first stage in achieving that doubtlessly genuine held goal involves, to use Corbyn's own words, "fostering a deeper understanding" of (the) antisemitism contained in certain forms of "anti-Zionism", as opposed to giving anti-Zionism an unqualified clean bill of health.

and imperialism incarnate. That is, most Jews alive.

That it is a left that allies with Palestinian (Hamas) and other clerical fascists and with groups of people in Arab and Muslim-majority countries who circulate old Nazi anti-semitic filth. That itself circulates the old Stalinist anti-semitic filth. That it consists of people who are not abashed, shamed or inhibited to find themselves running in a pack in full cry after the very people on which the worst racist atrocity in recorded history was inflicted.

In their perception of the left here, Jewish people — whether they are of the left or the right in their general politics — are not mistaken to distrust and be fearful of that group that now leads the Labour Party. They know that the tendency of the ostensible left to use Nazi images and comparisons — preposterous in themselves — to express opposition and criticism to Israel is specifically and pointedly anti-Jewish, a form of jeering and thick-skinned baiting of all Jewish people in their recent tragic history.

On one level episodes like the scandal-mongering around the Willsman affair blows it out of all proportion. He is an irascible old man. His remarks at the Labour Party National Executive, are the words of someone stung in his Labour Party patriotism and simple-mindedly blustering and harrumphing. But what he said illustrates the scale and depth of the problem of left antisemitism in the party. He hasn't noticed! But is inability to recognise left antisemitism or give it proper weight in itself antisemitism?

The serious question is can Corbyn deal with antisemitism in the Labour Party? Is not asking him to strike at his long-time friends and associates — including his right-hand man Seamus Milne — too much like asking him to lift himself up by his bootstraps?

Corbyn is for two states. If he takes that seriously he should want to sort out the “destroy Israel” people in the Labour Party. He should insist that advocates of the destruction of Israel have no place in the Labour Party; that comparisons of Israel when it does things we don't like, to the Nazis is not acceptable; that it is pointedly, and deliberately, offensively anti-semitic. It is necessary to preserve the right to criticise Israel as severely as events dictate. But denial of Israel's right to exist and defend itself is not criticising Israeli actions. It is possible to make specific criticisms or condemn Israeli actions without resorting to obscene and preposterous equations.

Corbyn should sort out the anti-semites.

And by the way: isn't it time someone started a “Labour's Critical Labour Friends of Israel” campaign to deal with left antisemitism — to assert and exercise the right of those who are not anti-semites, and who do not advocate the destruction of Israel to criticise Israel where and when necessary?

Further reading on left antisemitism

A collection of over 50 articles and pamphlets:

www.workersliberty.org/left-as Includes:

- The current debate on left antisemitism
- The anatomy of left antisemitism
- How to tackle antisemitism

A reply to some confused critics

By Dan Katz

Five Labour Party members have written an article ‘The AWL, Zionism and the struggle for equal rights in Israel/Palestine’ (bit.ly/2OmaOWX) in which they accuse the AWL of being a “Zionist front organisation” outside the Palestinian solidarity movement (defined as being the PSC, BDS campaigns, Jewish Voice for Labour etc).

They accuse us of “justifying settler colonialism” and justifying “apartheid”. They accuse “powerful” organisations such as Labour Friends of Israel as organising a witch-hunt in the Labour Party.

These writers oppose a two-state settlement and seem to be for a single, democratic state — but the authors are coy, or confused, and don't use this phrase, directly, to express their own views. They use these words: “universal exercise of full civil and political rights, as the basis for the freely expressed, democratic self-determination of both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian communities.”

Their document is a demagogic, self-righteous mess.

Where we stand

The Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL) is a revolutionary Marxist organisation. We say the Palestinian people are oppressed and that oppression must be opposed and ended.

The AWL is for a two states settlement between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples as the best possible, most democratic solution to the conflict. The Palestinian people have the right to a state alongside Israel, with the same rights as Israel. We have the same position as the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, the PLO/Fatah and the Israeli peace movement. Amongst the international trade unions and parties of the Second International the big majority are for Two States.

The AWL wants the Israeli and Palestinian workers to unite in the struggle for socialism and democracy, and considers mutual recognition of national rights to be the only basis for such unity.

Despite the right-wing governments in Israel and the US — hostile to the Palestinians — and the demoralisation created by the lack of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, the latest poll of West Bank public opinion (PSR, April 2018) still shows support for the Two State settlement at 48% (the One State solution has 28% support).

The Two States position is the popular, mainstream position, including among the Palestinian people.

It is not the AWL who is on the fringe of this debate in the international labour movement, it is our Single State critics.

All “solidarity” is good solidarity?

It is true, of course, that amongst the “Smash Israel” far left, the *Morning Star* Stalinists, and that broad swathe of left public opinion that these groups have mis-educated, Workers' Liberty is often in a minority.

We favour solidarity with the Palestinians, of course. But that solidarity must be compatible with — not contradict — our overall aims. And, for the same reasons, we will not support any and all forms of Palestinian resistance.

For example, we oppose Hamas rocket attacks and Islamist suicide bombings. Such attacks are carried out by groups who want to destroy Israel and who have no interest in Palestinian-Israeli dialogue and reconciliation.

We, however, want workers' unity and



Hamas rocket attacks simply help the Israeli right to persuade Israeli workers that there is no chance of a peace settlement with the Palestinians.

Our critics object to describing Hamas as clerical fascist. They have not been paying attention. Or perhaps our radical critics think it impolite to define the nature of an “organisation of the oppressed” — something that really shouldn't be mentioned at a South London dinner party.

Hamas toppled the PLO in Gaza using their own militias, a movement on the streets similar to a fascist movement. When Hamas came to power they purged Fatah and secular activists, killing some and driving others out of Gaza. They purged teachers, for example, and now to be a teacher in Gaza means being vetted by a Hamas mosque. At the same time they introduced stricter dress codes for school girls in a segregated education system.

Hamas also attacked the trade unions — the journalists' and health workers' unions, for example — in Gaza. And Hamas used violence against opposition protests — for example, shooting at a demonstration held in memory of Yasser Arafat, killing several marchers.

The police, judiciary and other repressive institutions are entirely creations of Hamas, responsible to Hamas alone. Hamas have created a single-party, clerical, police state.

Hamas are clerical fascists. So in Gaza we not only oppose Israeli policy, but Hamas too. We defend the trade unions and workers in Gaza against Hamas. We defend secularism. We don't forget we are Marxists.

BDS

We are not, in principle, against all boycott campaigns and we have been in favour of some targeted sanction campaigns against Israel. There is good reason, for example, to support a future Labour government introducing an arms boycott to pressure Israel to negotiate with the Palestinians.

BDS, as an overall strategy for Palestinian liberation, though, is counterproductive. The academic boycott, for example, is particularly stupid. Why should left wing British academics not travel to conferences Israel, when their presence might well be useful, politically? And why shouldn't an Israeli microbiologist write for a European science journal?

This apolitical (without even any consideration of an Israeli academics politics, and without recognising that many in Israeli academia favour peace with the Palestinians) picking out of Israeli Jewish academics highlights how easy it is for BDS initiatives to slip into hunts for Jews.

Our alternative to BDS is direct links between the British labour movement and Palestinian and Israeli working class and peace organisations. In other words we have a positive, constructive alternative to BDS: don't break links, make links for solidarity.

It is also to the point that our critics have no interest in the labour movement — Palestinian, Israeli or British. They do not write about the unions or labour movements. The AWL is Marxist and this is to the centre of our concerns.

Jeremy Corbyn has a position on boycotts of Israel which is similar to ours. Corbyn is also against a blanket boycott of Israel (without getting the idiotic abuse we receive).

Antisemitism on the left

In a particularly idiotic statement the critics condemn us for giving ourselves the right “to determine what and who is antisemitic, based on their own ideological criteria.” Yes, indeed, we are guilty of having our own ideas and using them systematically.

The AWL has a very long record of opposing antisemitism on the left. And, yes, we think we understand contemporary antisemitism.

The current — justified — furore in and against the Labour Party against critics of Israel who deny the right of the Israeli Jews to self-determination must be utterly mystifying for our radical critics.

How many states?

Our critics argue that Israel, the West Bank and Gaza have been governed as a single unit since 1967. That must be news to the people of Gaza who have been cut off and hemmed in by the Israeli state.

And finally, to deal with our critics' version of a single, democratic (but not secular, apparently) state: “universal exercise of full civil and political rights, as the basis for the freely expressed, democratic self-determination of both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian communities.”

If this means anything they expect “good sense” will prevail, delivered by some mechanism as yet unknown to history. Let us assume magic is involved. Some unknown fairy will descend and, waving the fairy wand will persuade the Israeli Jews to do what no other people have done before. Despite the Holocaust, the experience of living among hostile states which would destroy them given half a chance, they would dismantle their state and blend into a society with an Arab majority.

Ta-da! Problem solved!

It would nice to be able to believe that the Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews — hostile enemies for decades — could fold themselves peacefully into a single state, without borders separating each side from the other. But, of course, the notion is a fantasy. Nonsense.

Given the scope, intensity and scale of the Arab-Israeli conflict no other solution is possible other than formal separation. Living in separate states for a long period of peace could ease the tensions and hostilities between the two peoples and lay the basis for reducing barriers and borders in the future.

And nowhere else is such a thing proposed. Would our critics suggest removing the border between, say, France and Germany, who have been at peace since 1945? No, the borders remain and peaceful cooperation within the framework of the EU has helped to bring the peoples closer together.

• Further reading, AWL pamphlet *Two Nations, Two States* bit.ly/2M75r0c

The dangers of Germany's new left populism

By Dale Street

Sahra Wagenknecht, co-chair of the parliamentary fraction of the German left-wing Die Linke party, has announced the launch-date and name for a new extra-parliamentary "broad movement".

It will be launched on 4 September, and it will be called #StandUp.

On one level #StandUp — targeted at members of Die Linke, the SPD (German Labour Party), the Greens and those not members of any party — is a response to last year's general election results.

The CDU (German Conservative Party) and the CSU (regional Conservative Party, in Bavaria) saw their vote fall by eight percent but still won the highest percentage of votes (33%). The FDP (German Lib-Dems) increased its share of the vote by six percent and scored 11%.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) won over 12% and emerged as the third-largest party in the Parliament, with 94 seats. In the 2013 general election it had not won a single seat.

The SPD, coalition partner of the CDU/CSU in the 2013-17 government, suffered its worst result since the Second World War: 20%. The SPD's decision to re-enter a coalition government with the CDU/CSU condemns it to further decline.

The Greens secured a slight increase in their share of the vote (0.5%) as too did Die Linke (0.6%, an increase of half a million votes). This was the second-best result ever for Die Linke in parliamentary elections. But the headline figures concealed a more complex story.

Its vote increased in cities across former West Germany. But in former East Germany it lost 400,000 votes to the AfD. In Germany as a whole, only 11% of the unemployed and 10% of industrial workers voted for them — less than half the percentages in both categories who voted SPD, CDU/CSU or AfD.

Two months after the elections Oskar Lafontaine responded to the result by calling for "a new broad movement of the political left":

"I'm thinking of Corbyn in Great Britain — a credible person and a programme for the many. Or Podemos and 'La France insoumise' in Spain and France. The political left is increasingly losing influence. The SPD and Die Linke did not even pick up 30% (of the votes) together."

Lafontaine was a former leading figure in the SPD and a left-wing breakaway (WASG). In 2007 the WASG merged with the PDS (post-German-unification successor to the ruling East German Communist Party) to create Die Linke, in which Lafontaine now plays a role akin to that of elder statesman.

Lafontaine repeated the call the following month: "We need a left broad movement, a kind of left-wing people's party, in which left-wingers and sections of the Greens and the SPD come together."

In January Wagenknecht took up the proposal. She cited Corbyn and Melanchon (figurehead of "La France insoumise") as examples to be followed and described the new movement as one which would be "anchored in the internet."

A founding statement and name (#fair-land) for the new movement were leaked to the press in May, which was also the month in which the movement was to have been launched.

But the statement was only an initial draft, Wagenknecht explained, and the name had been deemed unsuitable. And in any case, by May only a small circle of names had been associated with the call for a new movement:

A 77-year-old ex-SDP-politician; a 75-year-old ex-Green-politician; a songwriter; a novelist; and Bernd Stegemann, author of "The Ghost of Populism", in which he had argued for a left populism to counter right-wing and neo-liberal populism.

POPULISM

By this time the proposed new "broad left movement" had become... a new "broad movement"!

In early June an article by Wagenknecht and Stegemann cited Podemos, "La France insoumise" and Jeremy Corbyn ("with him the Labour Party has undergone a genuine renewal") as examples of "successful left movements". But what the article advocated was:

"A broad movement which stands above parties, a mixture of an unconventional style of politics, modern digital infrastructure, classic social demands, and faces which are not household names and who are not primarily politicians themselves."

A fortnight later, in another newspaper article, Wagenknecht argued:

"We need a new broad movement: to win back democracy, for fairness in how we relate to each other, for distribution (of wealth) based on work, and for a politics of good-neighbourly relations with other countries."

A succession of newsletters from "Team Sahra" ("Politics for the Majority, Not the Millionaires.") in the following weeks likewise referred to a "broad movement", as too does the movement's now live website: "#StandUp — The Broad Movement — The Citizens Must Be Listened To."

"(No-one listens to us)" is also the theme of the video clips on the website:

"I ask myself if there aren't certain groups in Germany which we have been neglecting for a long time. ... Workers feel that no-one has been listening to them for years. They don't have a voice any more. ... The only way it can function is: listen to people, take it in, work on it.")

Although the launch of #StandUp has been hooked onto last year's election results, the initiative is rooted in the much longer-term political evolution of Lafontaine and Wagenknecht.

Both were once seen as icons of the hard left. Lafontaine even had the honour of being denounced by the *Sun* as "the most dangerous man in Europe". But in more recent years both have struck out in a much more right-wing and distinctly populist direction.

The core of their politics (which has been articulated more by Wagenknecht than by Lafontaine) is the contradiction between (bad) globalisation and finance capital and (good) national states and small-scale private enterprise.

According to the article by Wagenknecht



Across Europe the populist right has been on the rise

and Stegemann, globalisation is the mechanism through which multinational concerns "circumvent democratic rights, avoid taxes and put pressure on indigenous labour markets."

GLOBALISATION

Globalisation, writes Wagenknecht, has benefited the few and disadvantaged the many:

"Globalisation benefits above all the elites. The overwhelming majority is the loser. ... There is a small layer of the population which benefits from unbridled global capitalism. And there is a majority which would live better in a strong social state with job security."

Wagenknecht's hostility to globalisation feeds into hostility to the European Union, with an added xenophobic twist:

"The larger, the more complex, and the less homogenous a political unit is, the less it is capable of functioning. If there are also differences in language and culture, then it is a hopeless undertaking."

But Wagenknecht does not propose an EU-wide campaign for democratisation of EU structures, nor EU-wide co-ordination by trade unions to defend and level up workers' rights and rates of pay.

Instead, she proposes a return to sovereign national states — as if they had ceased to exist within the framework of the EU.

Ironically, while British Lexiters argue that the EU is a front for the dictates of Germany, Wagenknecht portrays Germany as a victim of the EU. (But that's the thing about populists the world over: it's always the fault of someone else somewhere else.)

Wagenknecht writes: "If we want to live again in genuinely democratic communities, there is there only the opposite road (away from globalisation). It is not production which must be internationalised, but the economic structures which must be decentralised and reduced in size."

And again: "For the foreseeable future

there is above all one instance in which genuine democracy can exist and the re-democratisation of which we must champion: the state with its various levels (of government) as it has developed historically."

The Eurozone is also incapable of reform. Instead, "a better idea would be to restore to the democratic states their own currency and to introduce controls on the movement of capital in currency exchanges."

Wagenknecht's writings are peppered with references to "the finance lobby", "the elite", "the establishment", "the money aristocracy", "the top ten thousand", "economic feudalism", "international finance capital", "predatory investors", and "monopolists who produce nothing" but have "unearned incomes of millions".

Bankers, speculators, casino-economy spivs — for Wagenknecht these are, so to speak, the real enemy, not capitalism per se. Economic wealth and political power are both concentrated in the hands of this one percent.

In support of this argument Wagenknecht repeats a quote popularly but not necessarily accurately attributed to "the legendary founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty", Mayer Amschel Rothschild: "Give me control over the money of a nation, and I don't care who makes its laws."

Wagenknecht's solution is not class struggle against the power of (all forms of) capital but the creation of a functioning competitive market economy, freed from the predations of finance capital, coupled with support for small and medium enterprises:

"In left-wing discourse, just as much as in right-wing discourse, capitalism is readily equated with a market economy. This is fundamentally wrong. ... Markets are not to be abolished. On the contrary, they must be saved from capitalism [by which Wagenknecht means: finance capital]."

"An entrepreneur is someone who leads



Sahra Wagenknecht addresses a Die Linke rally

and builds up a business with their own ideas, power and creativity. Any reasonable economy needs good entrepreneurs. But it does not need capitalists [by which Wagenknecht means: finance capitalists].”

“If we overcome today’s economic feudalism ... then the ground would be taken away from under the feet of capitalism [read: finance capital], but genuine entrepreneurs would encounter far better conditions. ... To put it particularly sharply: We must save not just democracy but basically also the market economy from capitalism.”

In a thriving market economy, “the goals would no longer be maximising short-term profits but: long-term business growth, solid profits in order to finance investments, and no increase in profits by means of precarious jobs or relocation to low-wage countries.”

Wagenknecht “marries up” her arguments in support of sovereign national states and a market economy, and also gives a particularly German twist to them, by portraying the economically dynamic but socially conservative post-war Germany as a veritable Golden Age:

“For the first time in industrial states personal standards of living for all sections of the population increased. Inequality declined, as did poverty, and a broad middle class emerged.”

“Between 1945 and 1971 there was not a single serious banking crisis. No-one missed all those derivatives, securities and other financial innovations, the existential economic importance of which is now the topic of dishonest fairy tales by the finance lobby.”

It would be ridiculous to accuse Wagenknecht, as some German commentators have, of peddling classic 1930s National Socialism.

But it would be equally ridiculous to deny that her distinction between (good) productive entrepreneurship and (bad) finance capital smacks uncomfortably of the Nazi distinction between *schaffendes Kapital* (productive capital) and *raffendes Kapital* (predatory capital), with its inbuilt antisemitic component.

Even if it is not her intention, her emphasis on defence of German national sovereignty against encroachments by the “EU gang of technocrats” likewise chimes in with far-right demagoguery about Germany’s lack of ‘real’ independence.

(The far-right “Engaged Democrats Against the Americanisation of Europe”, for example, call for: “... a sovereign and neutral Germany, peace treaties and withdrawal of occupation forces; direct democracy, referendum, and regionalisation; adherence to the German Basic Law and a genuine German constitution.”)

THIRD WAY

Wagenknecht also claims that her promotion of a market economy amounts to a “Third Way” between capitalism and the Stalinism of which she was once a fervent admirer. She admits to feeling uncomfortable with the term, and with good reason.

The genealogy of the notion of a market economy being a “Third Way” between capitalism and communism can be traced back to antisemites in Imperial Germany through the Nazis to contemporary fascism.

Although presented as a way to challenge the rise of the AfD, the core political ideas espoused by Wagenknecht (and Lafontaine) are positively dangerous. They incorporate and express right-populist ways of thinking and legitimise the politics of the AfD.

Applied to day-to-day political issues they become even more dangerous, in that they shift the ground of political debate onto that occupied by the AfD as well as opening the door to conspiracy theories:

“People have a right to expect that the state protects them from competition in the form of dumping. The right to asylum for the politically persecuted must remain. But labour migration is a problem, especially in the low-pay sector.” (Wagenknecht)

“Whoever crosses the border illegally should be offered the chance to return voluntarily. If he refuses this offer, the only option left is deportation.” (Lafontaine)

“Taking in and integrating a large number

of refugees and immigrants is linked to substantial problems. ... The state must now do everything to make sure that people in our country can again feel safe. That presupposes that we know who is in our country.” (Wagenknecht)

“Whoever misuses their rights as a guest has also lost those rights.” (Wagenknecht, speaking after an outbreak of criminal activities in Cologne’s 2016 New Year celebrations.)

“Behind the supposed government there stands an invisible government. Then as now we have an invisible government which, in reality, determines the fate of this world.” (Lafontaine)

“(Chancellor Merkel) shares responsibility (for a terrorist attack in Ansbach in July 2016). Alongside of the uncontrolled opening of borders, spending on the police has been cut to breaking point.” (Wagenknecht)

“Cosmopolitanism, anti-racism and the protection of minorities are the feel-good label which conceals a brutal redistribution (of wealth) from the bottom to the top.” (Wagenknecht)

In essence, the politics of Wagenknecht and Lafontaine amount to a jumble of various forms of economic and political regression.

Back to national currencies. Back to the national borders lowered by European integration. Back to the ‘social market economy’ of Ludwig Erhardt (CDU Minister of the Economy and then Chancellor, 1949-66). And back to an economy based on small-scale capitalist production.

The populism of that political and economic regression was reflected in the #fair-land statement leaked to the press in May:

“We stand up for fairness and social cohesion, for peace and disarmament. For not a few, internal European freedom of movement and immigration mean above all: more competition and badly paid jobs.”

“If politics looks on as hate-preachers of a radicalised Islam inculcate on five-year-olds a worldview which makes integration almost impossible, then the social climate is poisoned.”

“Back to the peace politics of Willy Brandt (German Chancellor, 1969-74). For a renewed strong social state. Lift the tax burden on small and medium incomes, and increase taxes on big fortunes and big concerns. Security in everyday life: more police and better-equipped police.”

“A European Germany in a united Europe of sovereign democracies, while maintaining cultural independence and with respect for tradition and identity.”

According to Die Tageszeitung, a more recent draft of the broad movement’s founding statement amends or removes a lot of such excesses and has “a more left-social-democratic tone”.

But even if the tone has changed – the newspaper has not published the latest draft — there is no reason to suppose a change in the underlying politics. In fact, there would be no point in launching #StandUp if there had been any substantial change in the underlying politics.

The fact that #StandUp has a website, a Facebook page and a Twitter account but not yet a founding political statement is also symptomatic of the kind of movement Wagenknecht is trying to build. As Die Tageszeitung puts it:

“Similar movements — Momentum in Britain, Podemos in Spain, Syriza in Greece — were successful only because they had active and energetic young people at their core. That will not work with elderly academics and ex-politicians. #StandUp is a paradox — a movement which is being founded from above.”

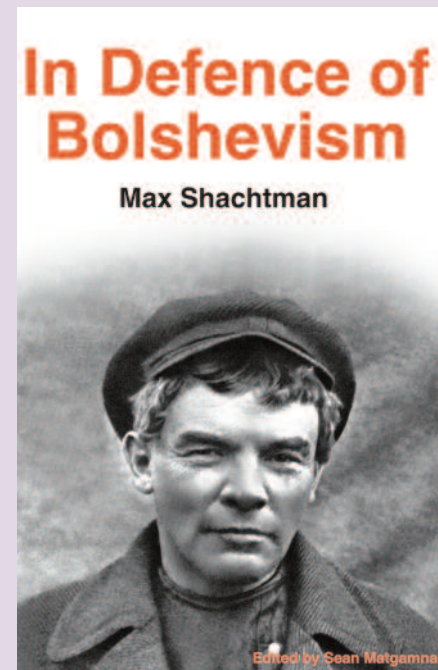
In Defence of The Bolsheviks: new book coming soon

Max Shachtman’s response to Ernest Erber in 1949, deserves to be considered one of the classic polemics of the Marxist movement.

It summarises and vindicates the Bolsheviks’ work to build a revolutionary party and lead a revolution.

It makes the case for continuing socialist efforts in times both of high and of low political temperature.

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An honest opponent of “pseudo-anti-imperialism”

Paul Hampton reviews “Indefensible: Democracy, Counterrevolution, and the Rhetoric of Anti-Imperialism” by Rohini Hensman (Haymarket, 2018)

Rohini Hensman’s book is a welcome intervention into debates on the international socialist left.

Above all it is a damning indictment of the state of those broad sections of the left, especially in Britain, who have embraced a negative, anti-Western, anti-US, “pseudo-anti-imperialism” — a politics that is also effectively pro-imperialist (of Russia, China, Iran), anti-democratic, anti-liberatory and ultimately anti-working class.

The central locus of the book is the conflict in Syria, where much of the left has been utterly wretched. But Hensman probes deeper, criticising the Russian and Iranian states that oppress their own peoples as well as standing behind Assad. She spares no blows against the Serb imperialists (and Croatian nationalists) who oppressed Bosnian and Kosovar Muslims, nor the Islamist forces that have divided Iraq. She makes some useful asides on the conflict with Gaddafi in Libya (where she backs Gilbert Achcar’s position of not opposing NATO intervention) as well as critical comments on Brexit and in favour of free movement. This is all refreshingly honest and consistent.

SYRIA

The first virtue of Hensman’s book is its straightforward retelling of the course of recent wars, its humane sympathy for the oppressed affected while damning the governments and forces involved in those conflicts.

In the long penultimate chapter on Syria, Hensman outlines the seven-year civil war in Syria, as one of the most devastating conflicts in recent history. Over 10 million people (half the population) have been displaced, with perhaps four million refugees. Probably half a million people have been killed and two million others wounded, including through gas attacks, barrel bombs, extra-judicial shootings, beheadings and other bestial acts of cruelty.

At the centre of this civil war is the Baathist totalitarian rule of Bashar al-Assad, who inherited the presidency in 2000. A military-Bonapartist state, bound by family and sectarian ties, broaches no political freedoms, no free trade unions and savage repression. As part of the Arab Spring, on 17 February 2011 demonstrations rallied in Damascus and elsewhere. The regime responded by releasing key Salafist leaders from prison, then conspiring with those forces to suppress the democratic opposition.

This set the stage for a bitter civil war between Assad’s state (backed by its allies in Russia, Iran and Hezbollah), against various stripes of Islamist armies (such as ISIS and al-Nusra) and the Free Syrian Army (FSA, backed by the US).

Hensman makes a strong case for the symbiotic relationship between the Assad regime and ISIS, including open collaboration between their forces both against the FSA and in economic matters such as the Tuweinan gas facility, Deir Ezzor airport and in Aleppo. ISIS funding came mostly from within Syria (not from outside). The juxtaposition of “Assad or the terrorists” is false on two counts: Assad’s regime terrorises the Syrian people with atrocities on a par with ISIS (such as chemical weapons attacks in August 2013 and November 2016); and the regime

was in alliance with ISIS for much of the war.

The book shows the extent of outside military intervention in support of Assad. Hezbollah backed the regime from the beginning, while Iran’s IRGC Quds Force was involved from the first year, training fighters inside Iran, Syria and Lebanon. The Assad regime was close to falling in July 2015 when Russia actively increased its support with airstrikes.

Hensman is politically sharp on the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing, the People’s Protection Units (YPG). The PYD’s model of democratic self-government in Rojava may have gained widespread acclaim, but these experiments took place within the context of a deal brokered by Putin between Assad and the PYD to attack ISIS and the FSA.

Hensman is equally critical of the US, France, Germany and Britain, from their token call for Assad to go and their lukewarm backing of the FSA. She rightly denounces the role of the UN for complicity with Assad’s war crimes. The book champions the resilience of civil society organisations in Syria last year, backed by others in exile such as the Alliance of Middle-East Socialists.

EARLIER CONFLICTS

Hensman explains well the roots of the reactionary, imperialist role of various other protagonists who intervened in Syria.

For example how Putin’s brutal wars in Chechnya and later in Ukraine set the copy-book for Russia’s support for Assad. The book outlines the terrible role of Serb imperialism in the genocide in Bosnia and later in the attempted ethnic-cleansing of Kosovo. Hensman shows how the Dayton accords froze ethnic sectarianism, while UN forces facilitated the killing of Muslims by Serb and Croat militias.

The book describes the reactionary role played by Khomeini’s regime in Iran drawing out its reactionary stance against women, including legal dress codes, forced marriage, stoning, rape, torture and harassment. Hensman attacks the brutal Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and highlights the emergence of workers’ and women’s organisations in Iraq after he was toppled by US-UK forces in 2003.

Hensman also never loses sight of the US, UK, German, French and other big powers as enemies of the working class in their own countries and everywhere. But she rejects the widely held left view that the reactionary nature of the big powers, mandates silence on other enemies of workers and the oppressed, notably the governments of Russia, Serbia, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Hensman tackles the issue of Muslim political activity sensitively — she cannot be accused of Islamophobia. She helpfully distinguishes four categories of Muslim politics: Muslim religious believers who are for secular states; Muslim fundamentalists (‘Salifists’) who want to live in a secular state; political Islamists who want to establish an Islamic state through elections; and political Islamists who want to establish an Islamic state through violence. This seems to be a useful framework for analysing similarities and differences of a range of forces, including Ennahda, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda and ISIS.

The really powerful element in this book is the way Hensman skewers the pretentious “pseudo-anti-imperialism” that so damages much of the global left. Readers of *Solidarity* will enjoy her take-down of so-called left



The author Rohini Hensman

journalists such as Seamus Milne, John Pilger, Robert Fisk, Patrick Cockburn and others. Hensman highlights where the organised left has embraced reactionaries in modern conflicts. Including:

- The support of Stalinists and some Trotskyists for Khomeini’s regime in Iran and his subsequent war with Iraq (such as the British SWP in 1987).
- Support for Saddam Hussein against the US-led coalition after his invasion of Kuwait in 1990.
- The SWP’s evenhanded treatment of nationalities in the former Yugoslavia, failing to recognise the oppression faced by Bosnians and Kosovars and their right to seek arms to fight back in the 1990s.
- The Stop the War Coalition (STWC) refusal to criticise Saddam Hussein in the 2003 war and its subsequent backing for Sunni and Shia militias (particularly al-Sadr), even when they were repressing workers, women and students.
- STWC’s veto on any protests against the Tehran regime in 2009, even when there was a popular movement inside Iran requiring solidarity.
- STWC and CND’s “Hands Off Libya” campaign to oppose Western intervention against Gaddafi in 2011.
- STWC’s invitation to Assad apologist Mother Superior Agnes Mariam de la Croix, November 2013.

There are many more.

Hensman sharply identifies the assumptions behind these stances: “a West-centrism which makes them oblivious to the fact that people in other parts of the world have agency too, and that they can exercise it both to oppress others and to fight against oppression; an Orientalism which refuses to acknowledge that Third World peoples can desire and fight for democratic rights and freedoms taken for granted in the West; and a complete lack of solidarity with people who do undertake such struggles.”

CRITIQUES AND CONCLUSIONS

I have some criticisms of Hensman’s book. For example, her treatment of Lenin’s book “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism” (1916) is superficial.

She claims that Lenin conflated two distinct phases of imperialism: an older striving by the big powers for colonial territory; with a later phase of finance capital, which dominates through loans, credit, trade rules etc. In fact Lenin’s book has deeper flaws. It was more of a popular summary with sharp political conclusions on the war than it was a coherent theoretical work.

However Hensman is right that Lenin’s book is not an adequate assessment of

today’s actual conditions, with a different correlation of national states, multinational corporations and finance bodies. She is right to acknowledge Lenin’s contribution to national liberation across the globe his stance of supporting all the oppressed and opposing all oppressors. Lenin was clear that in his day (as in ours) “the real anti-imperialist force” was “the socialist proletariat” and that Marxists “will not support a struggle of the reactionary classes against imperialism”.

Hensman appears to hold an anarchist-influenced interpretation of the early Russian revolution, making highly critical remarks of the Lenin-Trotsky regime, implying that it paved the way for Stalin. Worse, she seems to subscribe to the characterisation of Stalinist societies as state capitalist, following the position of the British SWP’s founder, Tony Cliff.

This is unconvincing. Cliff described Russia, China, Cuba etc as societies with different dynamics to Western capitalism, but he called them “state capitalism” only as a badge of convenience. Like other state capitalist theories he failed to get to grips with how these states originated, developed and (mostly) disappeared. Hensman’s embrace of Cliff is doubly incoherent because some of the worst perpetrators of “pseudo-anti-imperialism”, notably the SWP and its spin-offs such as Counterfire that run the Stop the War Coalition, still maintain Cliff’s state capitalist analysis.

But these are differences within a shared framework of consistent democracy and working class internationalism. Hensman rightly roots her analysis in the reality of the contemporary world order: “Capitalism is inherently global, and it has become even more so over the past half-century; unless the opposition to it is equally global, capitalism will always win. Globalising the opposition even to neoliberalism, in the first place, requires organising across national borders, which is facilitated by freedom of movement across those borders. Closing borders, as the far right wants to do, only sabotages the struggle against neoliberalism.”

In the last section, Hensman suggests five ways to fight the reactionary tendencies among the “pseudo-anti-imperialist” left: 1. pursuing the truth and telling the truth; 2. bringing morality and humanity back into politics; 3. fighting for democracy; 4. bringing internationalism centre stage; and 5. pushing for global institutions to promote human rights and democracy.

She is right to right to support the conception of international law (particularly when enforced from below by civil society), but is rather too soft on some existing global bodies for my taste. Similarly the demand for morality is fine if it means class lines, but rather less so if it is abstract appeals for justice. The best answer to “pseudo-anti-imperialism” is consistent working class politics. As such, we can wholeheartedly agree with her emphasis on internationalism, democracy and telling truth.

To say what is: that is the collective wisdom of the classical Marxist tradition. It is the common conception from Marx and Engels, to Luxemburg to Zetkin, and from Lenin and Trotsky. Assessing reality and drawing political conclusions from this analysis, not from preconceived formulas or recipes.

Hensman does a great service not only in opting for the right methodology, but carrying it through in her analyses of Syria and other conflicts. This is the only way to face down the “pseudo-anti-imperialism” on the left today.

Latin America, violence, and capitalism

By Pablo Velasco

Marielle Franco, the Brazilian socialist feminist and LGBT activist, was brutally gunned down in Rio de Janeiro in March this year.

Franco was a member of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), a revolutionary split from the Workers' Party (PT). She was an outspoken critic of police brutality and the Brazilian president's use of the army to intervene in the favelas of the city.

Franco's death has been attributed to gangs, but many suspect it was an extra-judicial killing by militias closely linked to the state.

Some 17 of the world's 50 most violent cities are in Brazil, while Rio has 10 times as many murders as London. Franco argued that working class action, in communities and workplaces, was the answer to both the state and the gangs. For many workers across the globe, socialist answers cannot come quickly enough.

Violent deaths are a fact of everyday life in many parts of the world and nowhere is the situation worse than in Latin America. Every year over half a million people are estimated to die as a result of violence across the continent, with more than two-thirds (68%) of those deaths counted as murders alone. This is more deaths than in wars and worse than some of the worst hotspots of global conflict.

Latin America has the worst rates of murder. It has eight percent of the world's population, but 38% of the world's murders. Just seven states in Latin America (El Salvador, Venezuela, Honduras, Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico and Colombia) account for a quarter of annual global murders. And those deaths are highly concentrated in the sprawling barrios of Latin American cities: four out of five violent killings occur on two percent of the same streets.

EL SALVADOR AND MEXICO

El Salvador has the highest murder rate in the world at present, with 81 violent deaths per 100,000 of the population — ten times the global average.

In January 2017, it was widely reported that El Salvador had just had a single day without a murder, compared to the norm of 12 a day and at worst of over 30 a day. However it was a false dawn: it turned out a few weeks later that a murder had taken place and the "record" was scratched.

The situation in El Salvador has been dire for decades. Civil war throughout the 1980s between the military junta and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) saw probably a hundred thousand killings, the use of death squads by the state and the decimation of civil society. At the turn of the century, its president sent troops into the streets to tackle gangs, which sent the murder rate soaring again. After a truce brokered in 2012 and some respite, in 2015 another president sent the army back to the streets with predictable results: a spike of more than 100 deaths per 100,000.

Mexico is a much larger and more industrially developed state than El Salvador, but it has been beset by growing violent deaths in recent decades. Mexican feminists estimate that more than 400 women have been murdered in Ciudad Juarez in the past 25 years. In September 2014, 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College were forcibly kidnapped and then disappeared in Iguala, Guerrero state. Barely any of their re-



Protesters hold a banner reading "who killed Marielle?" at protests after Marielle Franco's death

mains have been found.

The Mexican federal state's response has undoubtedly worsened an already dire situation. In 2011, the president sent the army on to the streets to wage war on the drug cartels, resulting in the murder rate shooting up. The current president tried the same tactic last year with the same result: some 32 murders per 100,000 people.

The ruling classes of the world have a whole literature with their "explanations" for murder. Whole departments of universities and a phalanx of academics pontificate about the causes of violent death. Very few point to the underlying systemic causes, but prefer to take refuge behind truism and speculation.

The *Economist*, house-journal of the cosmopolitan, globalising bourgeoisie recently assessed the situation of violent death in Latin America, providing a host of quantitative indices along with a long list of possible reasons for this continental predicament. They blame fragile governments, along with family breakdown. They point to the availability of weaponry as well as seasoned fighters left over from civil wars, alongside organised crime based around the drugs trade. Socio-economic causes such as urbanisation, unemployment as well as poor public services get a mention. Even drunken brawls turn out to be a major cause.

If the diagnoses are superficial, then many of the proposed "solutions" are facile. Repression is blithely discussed, including mass incarceration, harsher prisons, together with more police. This is married to "smarter" policing: "violence observatories" to generate more accurate statistics, to enable targeted state measures. In the long term they say economic growth will reduce poverty — somehow, slowly, trickling down from the rich while everything is left in private hands. These promises of a brighter future are the succour for a lamentable present.

SOCIALISTS AND CRIME

Marxists have a distinctive explanation for crime in general and violence deaths in particular. The analysis starts from our understanding of all social phenomenon as rooted in the particular social relations of production in a given society, or more concretely the class relations specific to a particular epoch and to particular places.

Latin America like most of the rest of the world is dominated by the capitalist mode of production, in which the means of production are mostly held as private property by capitalist owners, while the majority have to

earn their means of subsistence through waged labour. An irreplaceable social relation within capitalism are bourgeois states, with their desired monopoly of violence over a given territory and which attempts to define the terms of law (and criminality) within a given space.

Marx understood law as a fundamental condition for the reproduction of capitalism. The wage labour-capital relationship depends upon an apparently equal contract between the worker and the capitalist, while relations between capitals depend on a structured framework of contracts to underpin profit, investment, credit and other business activity. Therefore law takes on a particular form under capitalism that is distinctive from other class societies: effectively a form of "legal fetishism" that parallels commodity fetishism — the veneer of equality that masks exploitation and oppression underneath.

Therefore an explanation for violence in Latin America would have to examine the specific, concrete class relations in these societies, including the particular strata and divisions within the two main classes. Marxists point to the criminality of sections of the capitalist class, including the manner in which the ruling factions flout their own imposed laws, alongside the activity of capitalist businesses that own and control illegal activities such as the drugs trade.

Marxists highlight the partial absence of monopolised armed force in many Latin American states, so that many bourgeois states do not even control much of the activity of their own armed forces and police, who kill with impunity, while also facing direct challenges from armed gangs involved in criminal business activity.

Finally, Marxists also point to the precarity of wide sections of the exploited classes in securing their own means of subsistence, giving rise to a large informal sector in which legal relations are weak and coercion rife.

SOCIALISM NEEDED

Marxists want a socialist society organised on a completely different basis.

Working class rule would abolish private ownership of the means of production, while reorganising industry under democratic and workers' control. Instead of the venal pursuit of private profit, production for need would guarantee the means of life to billions who currently live for their next pay packet, and certainly that they could live without the fear of homelessness, hunger and poverty.

Democratic workers' states would remould law around new social relations of produc-

tion. These laws would be regulated by armed forces, the police and judiciary re-established on a consistently democratic basis. After the Russian revolution, some activists argued for the abolition of bourgeois law and for "proletarian" law. The Bolshevik legal thinker Evgeni Pashukanis argued that workers' states in transition to socialism would retain and indeed strengthen aspects of bourgeois law, both by legislating for real thoroughgoing equality and by decriminalising certain previously illegal activities. The Paris Commune's workers' government managed to rapidly reduce crime during its short existence.

How does this affect the situation in Latin America today? First, it means recognising that criminality is endemic to modern capitalism and that real, sustainable solutions require socialism. Working class self-emancipation will cut the roots of a whole range of social barbarism brought about by bourgeois rule. Therefore the labour movement needs to fight for socialism, rather than tinkering with reforms under capitalism. Socialism is possible in Latin American conditions, given the size and weight of the working class, along with its tremendous militancy over decades, including in the teeth of military rule.

TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

However the majority of the working class in Latin America is not currently organised for socialism, so what should socialists agitate for in immediate terms?

First, collective working class self-defence in the form of workers' own militias to protect working class communities from attacks by both the state and criminal gangs is the most immediate practical answer. This would be allied to demands for democratic control over the police and the armed forces, over the judiciary and all aspects of central and local government.

Socialists in Latin America should argue for democratic freedoms and changes to the law in a wide spheres of life. The legalisation and regulation of the drugs trade on a continental basis would go a long way towards tackling one of the drivers of violence in Latin America. Laws criminalising abortion, LGBT relationships and other forms of oppression should be scrapped immediately, while laws against domestic violence, hate crime and related matters should be strengthened.

Socialists should also agitate for the guaranteed means of life for millions in Latin America who currently do not have it. That means secure and paid employment, decent public services including housing, education and healthcare. It would involve the state nationalising private industry, even on a capitalist basis, as a means to build proper cities in place of barrios and provide work for all who need it. Lifting millions out of desperate poverty would also undercut the roots of violence between and within working-class communities.

A programme of demands like this, worked out by socialist workers across Latin America and adapted to their own circumstances, would revive the labour movement through the fight for immediate reforms while pointing in the direction of socialism. This was the political project of Marielle Franco and other socialist activists across the region.

It is an urgent and burning necessity for millions of workers across Latin America.

National rights and the decolonial gaze

Ashok Kumar replies to Sean Matgamna's article "Changing the culture of the left" (*Solidarity* 469).

Sean Matgamna attracts our gaze as he conjectures on "the whole truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth".

Alice in Wonderland, a fabled figure of fiction, is a subject of his piece (*Solidarity* 469) and as we know, when luncheoning with the Mad Hatter, she divined that what we call truth might not be all that it seems. Conman Bolshevism is indubitably one amidst a multitude of truth subjects.

"Hostility to the Palestinians and see the Hebrew nation as superior and its rights as more important", Sean avers, is the target of our dispute. Alice would perhaps retort that "in the kingdom of the blind, the looking-glass is useless". In the kingdom of today's modern Labour Party, Matgamna's neo-Zionist varifocals lead down the blind alley that "the second most terrible "racist" crime of the 20th century was the vengeful driving-west of 13 million Germans at the end of the war, with the death of perhaps half a million of them."

Settled bodies negotiate betwixt and between the interstitial, spatial, temporally and indeed temporally subjectivated affects bequeathed by colonial narrata. Mad Hatter-like looking glasses distort and distend these narrata through the colonial gaze. As one proverb in my own ancestral homeland teaches us: "the poor man looks at his reflection in the water; the average man looks at his reflection in the glass; the wise man looks at his reflection in the eyes of his sons".

Islam and its view of desires, the body – the subject, and her sons – have long held sway in the land I call home. Long into humanity's future, the historian of racialized (and conversely, racializing) bodies will wonder if his, her or, indeed, their contemplation of the phenomenology of systemic, institutional

and epistemic racisms took proper account of this racism's manifold violences.

Historiographies of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) will surely account for the quality and quantity of this debate, progressing across the letters pages of recent issues. As Sean himself generously notes, this "discussion [has been] good". Self-care aside, I more than anyone feel the responsibility to the readers of *Solidarity* and *Workers' Liberty* to sink my teeth into the meat of the issue and discern whether it is, indeed, halal, or kosher.

Devouring these flesh-like meats is, of course, only part of the Mad Hatter's luncheon. Our beef in this epistolary exchange is, here as on so many other occasions, truly a question of determining the Self. National liberation is, as one Trier-born friend of ours might have had cause to remark, the sigh of the oppressed, the desire in a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions. Each subject-position in this exchange must be rooted in, and founded on, this foundational reality.

The unmissable conclusion of all of Sean's oeuvre when it comes to apportioning self-determination is quite simply that "there are no good and bad peoples". Hitler-led German settlers in Poland, white South Africans, Northern Irish Protestants, Australians, and Zionists in the West Bank are not mere bogeymen: for my correspondent all of these, too, are peoples with national rights. Occupation does not, he insists, produce eternal legacies of guilt: the Ulster Scot like the Catholic, the Israeli like the Palestinian, has through tortures and tragedies also carved out his claim, his right, his place in the world.

Uncompromising though these claims may be, the fact that there are not good and bad peoples does not deny the difference between self-determination for a people and stolen booty. Self-determination could hardly be said to apply to, say, Canada and its so-called peoples, after they themselves physically eliminated the First Nations precisely in

order to create an artificial white majority in that very land. Arming the aboriginal peoples of Australia, Canada, Chile, New Zealand and such like is, in this sense, nothing but a prerequisite for an equality of national freedoms.

Nobody will be more aware of this than a future historian looking back on the states founded by the British Empire in the eighteenth century but which look increasingly untenable in the twenty-first. Doubtless some will raise qualms, but today's historian does not suggest that the labour movement's support for the struggle to end white South Africa, or the historical dead-end that was Rhodesia, was mistakenly based on contrasting "good" and "bad" peoples. So, too, can temporary totems to regimes of whiteness in Australia, Canada, Chile, and New Zealand be seen in this same perspective.

LOGIC

Under Sean's logic Canada is nothing but an eternal fact, a state of stasis. Pity whoever would suggest that the mighty, the powerful, the so-self-assured behemoths of today are not, in fact, destined to maintain their rule forever!

Of course, not every national situation, every relationship between colonised and coloniser, is doomed to be resolved in the same brutal means that asserted themselves so dramatically in the twentieth century, not least in my own homeland.

Never in Sean's article does he arrive at what we could meaningfully call a definition of colonialism. There is more a "colourblind" effort to set all peoples on an equal footing, not least in a discussion of accusations of racism on the Left which are supposedly "little more than an expletive, a political swearword, a species of ideological terrorism". He here confuses cause for effect, in suggesting that even our words in rebellion against colonialism are to be painted in the language of

terrorism and its policing. Or, perhaps, counter-insurgency?

Unabashed in defence of the AWL's positions, Sean suggests that "pro-Palestinians of Kumar's sort" are themselves the racists. So much for deeming the word "racism" itself a mere piece of "ideological terrorism". Are we to accept the terrorism of the colonisers even when the terrorism of the colonised is painted as a genocidal threat to the national minorities composed of settler colonialists? Never is this more confused when he attributes to the Soviet Union the aim of mounting a "colonial war of conquest" in Afghanistan, even when the world's first socialist state supported a legitimate and truly national government.

Denying the decolonial gaze thus brings Sean to equate oppressed with oppressor, painting a situation in which an Arab-Islamic "conquest" is about to be imposed on the Zionist settlers who have conquered Palestine. So much for "backing" the Palestinians, when he deploys crude stereotypes and Zionist talking points to defame the very forces who are fighting against the ongoing colonisation project. Our future historian will surely need a materialist account of the colonial project itself, rather than a mere exchange of moral absolutes on the violences of the conflict.

For Lewis Carroll's Alice, the truth was not simple and absolute. Prescribing some fixed idea of nationhood and self-determination as transhistorical, as if there were to be one state per self-defining national community, does not allow us to grasp the particularities of colonialism, built precisely on the denial of the Other. Of course, it is racist to demonise the colonised as backward and violent. Of course, it is racist to suggest that settlers have a national right that can usurp the rights of those they replace.

Sean's narrative sets one set of bodies at the expense of smothering the decolonial gaze.

Should we reverse history?

Sean Matgamna replies to Ashok Kumar (above).

Sometimes a person will have to do odd things for socialism.

Trotsky recorded that when women induced the soldiers not to fire at the crowds at the outset of the February Revolution, they had to get at them by first crawling under the belly of Cossack horses. What Trotsky referred to so summarily loses much of its meaning in the minds of modern people who have no experience of horses.

Your horse has a very small brain — the size of a chestnut, perhaps. A horse is sensitive and that makes horses appear intelligent sometimes. But they aren't. Perhaps because of this nobody has ever succeeded in potty-training a horse. And of course a horse is far too big for nappies. He just puts his tail to one side and discharges a volley of lumps of solid waste matter; he will just stand there and discharge a large volume of liquid waste matter. Anywhere. So when a troop of horses is milling around, the ground tends to become messy. The women, good Russian proletarians, braved it. They did what they had to do.

So too with Kumar. It's messy work and I'm a timid old Irish prole; but I'll think of

those heroic Russian women workers and crawl through it.

Kumar has been boasting on social media, I understand, that his involvement in this discussion is a "piss-take". If he is satirising the language of pretentious academe, that would explain quite a lot. If he is taking the piss it is by way of heroic self-mockery. But whatever he thinks he's doing he is showing himself up as incredibly confused and, it needs to be said, disabblingly ignorant. His language is as precise as candy floss or cotton wool, and it is often difficult to know what he thinks he means. His piece is scarcely even an attempt to reply to what I wrote.

Kumar outlines a full philosophy of modern history.

Apparently I think: "there are no good and bad peoples." And "Hitler-led German settlers in Poland, white South Africans, Northern Irish Protestants, Australians, and Zionists in the West Bank... For my correspondent all of these, too, are peoples with national rights. Occupation does not, he insists, produce eternal legacies of guilt: the Ulster Scot like the Catholic, Israeli like the Palestinian, has ... also carved out his claim, his right to his place in the world."

Striking here is Kumar's lack of grip on both 20th century history and on AWL policy.



We call on Israel to get out of the West Bank and say that this is territory for a Palestinian state. I said nothing about Hitler-led German settlers in Poland (that is, invaders of 1939). The 13 million Germans driven out of Russian held territory (with the prior agreement of Britain and America) were people whose ancestors had lived there for centuries — these were the three million Sudeten Germans and the people of the East Prussian part of the German state and others.

Apparently never am I "more confused" than when "(I) attribute to the Soviet Union the aim of mounting a colonial war of conquest in Afghanistan even when the world's first Socialist state supported a legitimate and

truly national government." They did more than "aim to mount" a war of colonial conquest. They mounted it and sustained it in a decade-long war of colonial conquest, whose methods were identical to those of the French in Indo-China and Algeria. The idea that the Stalinist government after 1978 and the Russian puppet government after Christmas 79 was a "legitimate" and "truly national government" is pure Stalinist ideologising. And pure Stalinist lying. There is quite a lot of AWL literature on Afghanistan on our website, which I suggest Kumar looks at.

Kumar writes: "...The labour movement's support for the struggle to end white South Africa, or the his-

torical dead-end that was Rhodesia, was (not) mistakenly based on contrasting “good and bad peoples.” But we supported the peoples of South Africa and Zimbabwe against the minority white ruling caste!

From here on in I have difficult in understanding what Kumar is saying. It will be enough to highlight it. “So, too can temporary totems to regimes of whiteness in Australia, Canada, Chile, and New Zealand be seen in the same perspective.” They are like South Africa? In light of his errors on the most basic of facts, I can’t be sure he doesn’t think that Australia, Canada, Chile, and New Zealand are ruled by white minorities.

Now if I were writing a satire on what Kumar and people like him say of Israel-Palestine, reducto ad absurdum stuff, I would write something like what he writes here, have him propose that these and other such countries be turned over to the descendants of the displaced peoples. What is he saying, or proposing? For Canada and “its so-called peoples”? He wants to drive out the descendants of British and French colonists? If he doesn’t, what is he on about? And Australia, Chile, New Zealand? “Arming the Aboriginal peoples, of these countries is in this sense, nothing but a prerequisite for an equality of national freedoms.”

SENSE

What in the name of sense is he talking about? We should want an uprising of the Aborigines of Australia? We want the Amerindians to assert themselves in arms? In Chile? In New Zealand we want the Māori people to rise up? In the colonial settler state of Argentina, which he neglects to mention, we want the surviving two percent or so of the original population to rise in arms? To do what? Drive out the rest? I repeat what on earth is the man talking about?

Does he want a great movement across the world to reverse the ethnic transfers of the last five hundred years? Socialists are concerned with vengeance for the displaced, massacred, vastly-depleted peoples of history?

The displacements and massacres of the earlier peoples in these countries is of course a terrible story. It happens that I am rereading Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, an account of the Nazi-like massacres of the Amerindians. These stories arouse anger, indignation, pity, regret. But history — terrible, savage, merciless — is what this is.

We can only alleviate some of the consequences of what has been and what was done. In the present, socialists advocate working-class unity across the divides that still exist, for the creation of a socialist society on the basis of what history has so far created.

I said that the charge of racism was frequently employed as a form of ideological terrorism to forbid thought and proper discussion of difficult questions. He responds that I make “a ‘colour-blind’ effort to see all peoples on an equal footing; [he] confuses cause for effect, in suggesting that even our words in rebellion against colonialism are to be painted in the language of terrorism and its policing. Or perhaps counter-insurgency?” Again, what is he talking about?

Where colonialism exists Marxists support uprisings of the colonised against the imperial power. But colonialism is more or less a historical category. What do we advocate after it has ceased to exist? Marxists advocate a workers’ revolution against capitalism — the unity of all workers against capitalism, native and foreign. We advocate “black and white unite”.

There isn’t space for me to reprise what I wrote on Israel-Palestine. Against Kumar’s effort it, surely, isn’t necessary either.

“It’s good to follow a polemic in real time”

Rob Marsden runs the websites *Red Mole Rising* and *Splits and Fusions*, which make available historical archive material from various Trotskyist currents (in the broadest sense) publishing in Britain. He spoke to *Solidarity*.

Q. Tell us a bit about your websites, *Splits and Fusions* and *Red Mole Rising*.

A. *Red Mole Rising* came first, and it is now a nearly complete archive of the press of the Fourth International in Britain, that is, of the group best known as the IMG, from 1950s into the 2000s. It has complete runs of *International*, *Black Dwarf*, *Red Mole*, *Socialist Challenge*, *Socialist Action*, etc., and lots of magazines and pamphlets.

I’ve worked with loads of people on that. Some of *The Week* is up there, and I’m intending to do the rest of *The Week* some time soon.

Splits and Fusions is a much broader and more ambitious project, including archives from many different Trotskyist currents, in the broadest definition, and some other related currents. It now has material from most of the major traditions from the very early days through to today.

I tend to present the material in a fairly neutral manner, not to offer commentary or judgements but just to make it available.

The coverage so far, and the future development, largely depends on what comes in, on what comes my way from various sources.

Q. Doing these websites has been a lot of work. How did you get into it?

A. I’ve always been a collector of odds and ends, and always interested in the history of the Trotskyist movement, ever since I was a student in the 1980s. The impulse for these projects came about eight years ago, when an old comrade was getting rid of a lot of papers.

I realised that very little of that material was available online — especially back then — and thought I could and should fix that. So I bought a scanner and started. From that point, the work feeds itself, as people bring me more and more material.

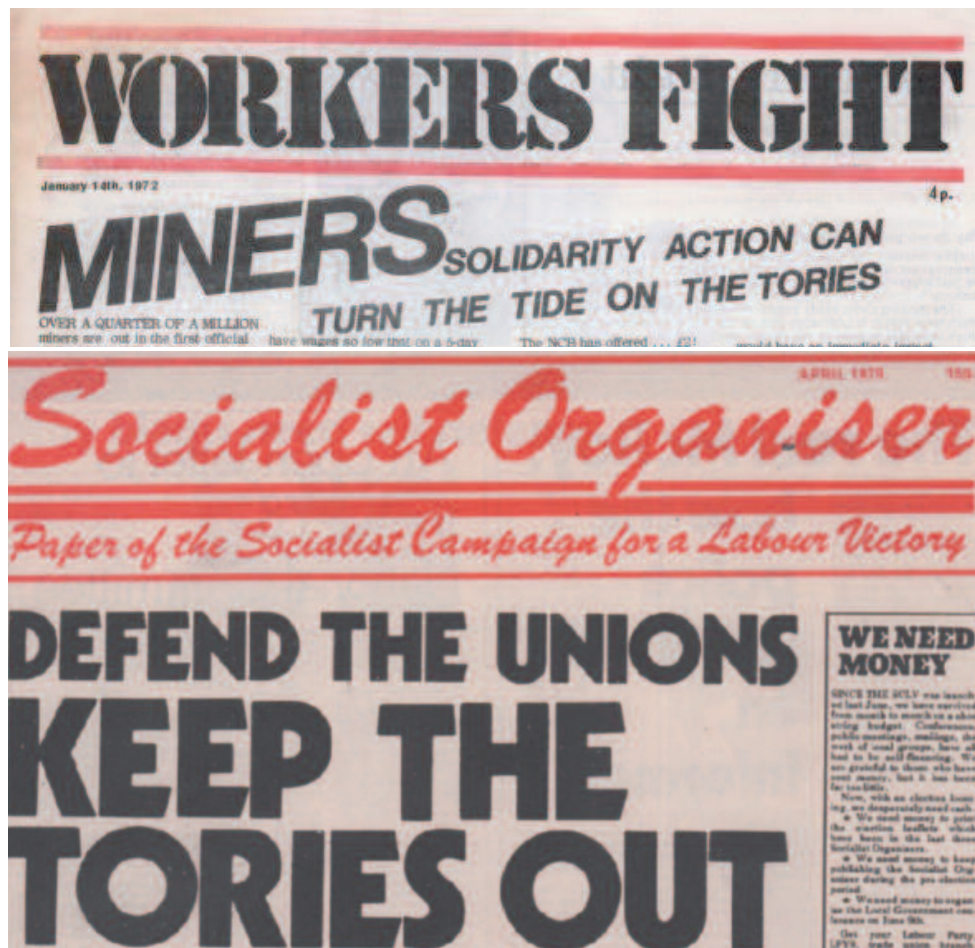
Q. Piecing together these archives, you will have found different political tendencies changing their political positions quite markedly over the years. We take some pride in the Workers’ Liberty tendency that our changes of position — and they’ve been important — have been done through open and explicit rethinking, are conscientiously recorded, and are linked back in to the traditions of Trotskyist politics. Is that a fair judgement, or are we deluding ourselves?

A. It’s a fair judgement. You do see shifts as you go through the archives. There’s stuff from the Workers’ Liberty tendency from the 1970s on Palestine and Ireland, for example, which is very different from today. But all the polemics are there, in black and white.

It’s good to be able to follow a polemic in real time, in the press, and on the letters page as well as in the big set-piece articles.

Q. What has most surprised you when unearthing publications from long-unexamined archives?

A. With this work, I’m often in almost un-



Rob Marsden scanned in the full archive of AWL predecessor organisation Worker Fight and Socialist Organiser newspapers

charted territory, looking at material which has not seen the sight of day for decades. That is always interesting.

For example, I came across a ten-page bulletin entitled *Revolution*, from 1939-40, published in the name of the Socialist Workers’ League, a group which does not appear in any of the standard published histories.

From my inquiries, most likely it was a publication of the Revolutionary Socialist League [a group formed by a 1938 fusion, which was the official British section of the Fourth International until 1944], under a false name.

With World War Two beginning, the RSL expected that it would be banned, and tried to deal with that by publishing under a false name and without giving an address or contact details.

Then again, a few years ago a friend of mine said he had at home the tape recording of the 1971 *Red Mole* interview of John Lennon by Tariq Ali and Robin Blackburn. No-one had heard the interview for 30-odd years. Here we had 80 minutes of audio from an interview which previously existed only in a heavily-edited transcript.

Q. Do you get any sense of what readers are paying most attention to on your websites, and what they’re getting from them?

A. I get some idea from the comments on the linked Facebook pages. The people looking at the sites are a mix of older people who were around on the left in the early or mid-70s, and those younger people who are more interested in the history of the movement.

I also hear from people researching books and other studies. There is a lot of interest in the late-1960s material, such as *Black Dwarf*, and the women’s publications.

Last year a TV company got in touch because they wanted to reproduce some issues

of *Red Mole* from the scans on the website. If you watch the TV mini-series *Guerrilla*, you will see copies of *Red Mole* on the floor in some of the scenes, and those were printed off my scans.

Q. Marty Goodman and others have done a lot of work on US Trotskyist archives, and made the results available on www.marxists.org. What do you know of comparable work on the archives of Trotskyist publications in other countries?

A. I know of nothing quite so comprehensive. I’m in regular communication with Marty Goodman and David Walters at the Marxist Internet Archive, and I guess they will also have contact with other groups round the world, but as far as I know the main archives elsewhere are in various libraries, and fragmentary.

That is one of the things that drives me to do the work. The libraries do an excellent job in keeping archives, but the material there is not freely and easily available. I want the history of the movement to be available to activists as well as to academics.

There is the *Radar* archive of French Trotskyist material, but, as I understand it, the person who set that up has moved on, and no-one is now working on it. It’s not really an ongoing project. There is also the online archive of *Cermtri*, which is being developed, but it is only a partial archive and only of the Lambertist current.

However, maybe someone will come back to *Radar*, for example. Sometimes I’ve paused on my project, even for up to a year, then something happens to get me going again.

If anyone has any interesting material, they can get in touch at redmolerising@outlook.com. In particular, I’m interested in locally produced pamphlet or bulletins from any tendency.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- ✂ Independent working-class representation in politics.
- ✂ A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- ✂ A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- ✂ Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- ✂ A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- ✂ Open borders.
- ✂ Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- ✂ Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- ✂ Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- ✂ Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Nottingham shows the campaign against Brexit can only be left wing

LABOUR

By Will Sefton

On Monday 30 July, 130 people gathered in Nottingham to hear left wing anti-Brexit speakers make the case for Labour to oppose Brexit.

Speakers included Manuel Cortes, General Secretary of the TSSA rail union as well as local migrant workers and anti-racist campaigners.

The organisers had held stalls in the town, advertised at the local Pride and other festivals and covered social media. The meeting surprised even them. It was five times larger than a similar event that was had held only three months earlier.

This shows that there has been a significant increase in anti-Brexit feeling amongst Labour members and supporters. This in constituencies that had large Leave majorities in the referendum and up to now have been defeatist and demoralised about the prospects of opposing Brexit.

Progress had held a public anti-Brexit meeting only a few days before with Liz Kendall speaking. They had less than twenty in attendance. A comparison of the sizes of the meetings is proof that only a campaign from the left can win the Party to harden its stance against Brexit — so poisoned is Progress's intervention in the Party now seen to be.

There were inevitable attempts from the floor by right wing Labour activists to personalise and factionally exploit the issue against Corbyn. But they were met with silence whilst the left wing speakers received loud applause.

A campaign has been set up in the locality and we know we have a lot to do. Some local CLPs with

undoubtedly large anti-Brexit majorities amongst their membership have so far refused to support a final referendum on the deal with the option to remain in the EU. Some have gone so far as to try and stop any further debate before conference. A Huffington Post article quotes a "senior Momentum source" as saying there is "absolutely no way" that the organisation can ignore calls for a members' vote on its position before Labour conference.

At this stage we do not know whether we will get a debate on Brexit at Labour conference.

We must find ways of asserting Labour members' views, through meetings open to the wider memberships in constituencies. We also need to demonstrate that the Party is increasingly out-of-step with Labour voters and that there is no logic in conceding to nationalist ideas and demoralisation where



Nottingham Left Against Brexit

they exist in working-class areas. Labour must have sufficiently radical policies to overcome those.

On the Saturday following the meeting, Left Against Brexit supporters in Derbyshire Dales constituency who had come to the meeting held a successful stall at an agricultural market.

The response will no doubt encourage us to do similar stalls in various locations throughout Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

Taking the fight to Corbyn's backyard

Around 100 people attended the North London Left Against Brexit meeting to discuss and plan anti-Brexit activity in the run up to Labour Party conference and beyond.

The meeting involved lively discussion and Manuel Cortes, Catherine West MP, Joseph Healy and Anna Oppenheim all laid out different perspectives on a left-wing strategy to stop Brexit. Cortes and Oppenheim in particular made the case for strong unions and a combative labour movement that unites workers across borders and seeks to level up wages and terms and conditions. The meeting broke up into groups to discuss local activity, in-

cluding passing contemporary motions, preparing arguments for winning over more sceptical Corbyn supporters as well as planning street stalls and other public-facing activity.

Several people expressed their concerns that there is an almost bunker-like mentality around some parts of the Labour left, that any criticism or even discussion on Corbyn's policy is part of an attack.

The LAB is important because it will help to open up the space for necessary discussion and debate not just on Brexit but how the grassroots of the Labour Party relate to the current leadership.

Events

9-12 August

Workers' Liberty Summer Camp
Height Gate Farm, Stoodley Glen
bit.ly/2zNCWjh

Monday 13 August

South London organising meeting — the Left Against Brexit
7pm, Global Justice Now, 66 Offley Road, London SW9 0LS
bit.ly/2nmkoxf

Sunday 19 August

Peterloo massacre 2018 commemorative rally and picnic
Manchester City Centre
bit.ly/2LeBrir

Sunday 26 August

The future of socialism: South London summer event
The Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton Street, Kennington, London SE17 3AE
bit.ly/2AV04N4

8-9 September

Student Activist Weekender
10am, UCL, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT
bit.ly/2mm6BpY

Have an event you want listing?
Email: solidarity@workersliberty.org

Student activist weekender

8-9 September // UCL // All welcome!

Register for free at: bit.ly/200XXgl

Student activists from across the country are coming together before the first term for a weekend of practical activist training, discussions on organising, and planning our movement's next steps for campaigning on various national issues highlighted in the student left unity statement — sign up here if you agree! — goo.gl/1Qvqvk

Hosted by:

The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts; People & Planet; RENT STRIKE; NUS Trans Campaign; Young Greens; Aberdeen Student Left; Stop the Elephant Development; UCL: Fund Our Mental Health Services; Surrey Labour Students; Free University of Sheffield; LSE Radical Politics Collective; Surrey Cut the Rent; UCL Cut the Rent; Bristol Student-Staff Solidarity

Free accommodation will be provided in local activists' houses if you're coming from outside of London.

PCS pay ballot falls short

By PCS Independent Left

Civil Service union PCS's national ballot for strike action over pay failed to meet the 50 percent turnout threshold imposed by the Trade Union Act. This despite the most intensive period of activity in the union's recent history. What do we learn from this? And what comes next?

Despite the tangible sense of disappointment felt by all activists, we can be proud. The result wasn't what we wanted, but the commitment and effort of everyone who leafleted, who canvassed members in the workplace and who gave up their own time is not in doubt.

The activist training schools that ran ahead of the launch of the ballot, the first of their kind in PCS, were an extremely welcome development. We need more of this, and a wider effort to teach all reps how to organise and build campaigns in the workplace.

Likewise, it was heartening to see the amount of support given to branches by the union apparatus. The cooperation between branches, through town committees and similar, as well as the deployment of full time staff to enable local organising efforts both represent developments that PCS needs to maintain now that we have left the ballot period.

These efforts paid off in the level of engagement of members with the campaign, in the recruitment of new members (some 2,000 according to the General Secretary's recent YouTube message) and activists, and in helping many branches improve their density and organisation levels. We need to ensure that the improved organisation is maintained, and the new activists are encouraged and supported in getting more involved.

The consultative ballot last year gave PCS a breakdown of the turnout by office and branch which showed where our areas of strength and our shortfalls were. This was used this time, with more full-time staff and senior lay reps encouraged to leaflet in those areas. There now needs to be a forensic examination of where the union is coming up short and a concerted effort

not just to mobilise the next time a campaign requires it but to actively rebuild the union from the ground up.

There was also a lull in activity between the close of the consultative ballot and the decision at Conference to run a statutory ballot.

The monthly pay protests continued, but little else from a national perspective. There should have been no doubt that the consultative ballot turnout would lead to a statutory ballot. In the intervening seven months, we had ample time to lay the organisational groundwork for a decisive result: More activist schools and earlier, covering not just what was needed during the ballot period but how we made the most of the lead up; using the workplace mapping and organising skills those schools could teach activist to take a more deliberate and painstaking approach to getting ballot addresses, grade information. This would have given us a solid foundation for building and maintaining the momentum of the campaign.

ORGANISERS

Where this was already being done it is because amongst our lay activist base PCS has a number of skilled and experienced organisers who have been assets to the pay campaign.

Co-opting such activists full time to the ballot effort would have undoubtedly made them even more effective, and it is something that PCS needs to seriously consider.

The union needs to be honest and transparent in its analysis of what happened.

The NEC met the day after the ballot to discuss the next steps. The final agreed recommendations were that the union would support action that groups decided on a delegated (departmental) level. That the building for the 2019 pay campaign would start immediately



with a draft document presented to the NEC in September which would include a plan to prepare for a 2019 civil service-wide ballot, and that an extraordinary pay conference/event be held at the end of 2018/beginning of 2019.

The Socialist Party, who now have 3 members on the NEC since the President Janice Godrich either left or was expelled for standing against their preferred candidate for Assistant General Secretary, asked that the pay conference be agreed for October. This appeared to be a way of artificially distinguishing their candidate from Godrich, especially as this is the first time they have broken ranks in a NEC meeting for 15 years.

We need to understand the voting figures and any outcome of the delegated pay bargaining, including whether there will be any group-based strike action before any national conference is held.

The vote was easily carried with the Independent Left supporting the original motion, but making the point that any group action needs to be co-ordinated and that in future we should consider separate bargaining unit ballots instead of a single civil service wide one.

We can win this fight, and we can smash ballot thresholds in the future. Key to that is rebuilding the union and re-orienting it towards organising the workforce from the ground up.

• Abridged from:
pcsindependentleft.com

Strike ballots due on Tube

By Ollie Moore

Tube union RMT is balloting its members at the Leytonstone train depot on the Central Line for strikes to oppose the removal of platform staff on the Waterloo and City Line.

The union says the removal of these staff could lead to serious safety issues. The ballot closes on 14 August.

RMT has also announced a ballot

of drivers on the Metropolitan Line to oppose the closure of the staff canteen at the Harrow-on-the-Hill depot. A timetable for the ballot has yet to be announced.

Elsewhere on London Underground, fleet maintenance staff at the Ruislip depot struck again on 3 August, in an ongoing dispute aimed at winning pay parity with other grades of workers in the depot.

RMT has also announced a dis-

pute with cleaning contractor ABM over the ongoing victimisation of staff, after two union members were dismissed on trumped up charges.

Meanwhile, drivers' union Aslef has said it will ballot its entire Tube membership, after a driver was attacked when passengers broke into her cab.

Both Aslef and RMT have been raising the issue of cab security for some time.



Cleaners organise and strike

By Gemma Short

Cleaners at the Ministry of Justice and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea council (RBKC) will strike on 7, 8 and 9 August over pay and unfair working conditions.

The cleaners at the Ministry of Justice are contracted by outsourced cleaning company OCS, and those at RBKC are employed by Amey.

Cleaning workers at Health Care America (HCA) locations in London will also strike later in August. HCA is the biggest private healthcare company in the world and has sites in London including at the Shard, Guy's Cancer Centre, and Harley Street Clinic. It's cleaning is outsourced to Compass.

All of the workers at organised by the United Voices of the World (UVW) union and share three common demands:

- An occupational sick pay scheme: Amey, OCS and Compass do not have an occupational sick pay scheme. This means workers rely on Statutory Sick Pay. SSP is unpaid for the first three days of illness, and just £18 per day from the fourth day of sickness onwards.

- Parity of terms and conditions with directly employed staff: The second common grievance and demand of the strike is equality between subcontracted and directly employed staff in terms of holiday entitlements, hours and overtime pay. A two-tier workforce leads to undercutting, a race to the bottom and exploitation says the UVW.

- Payment of the London Living Wage with guaranteed annual increments: The London Living Wage is currently £10.20 per hour — a stark contrast to the National Minimum Wage, bizarrely re-labelled the National Living Wage by the Conservative Government in 2016, which is just £7.83 per hour.

As Solidarity went to press on 7 August RBKC had just announced they would be ending contracts with Amey and taking cleaning contracts back in house.

As with a lot of other strikes involving low paid, and precariously employed workers, these strikes are about safety and dignity at work as well as pay. Mercedes, a striking cleaner at HCA said: "We are not just demanding

fair pay, we need basic vaccinations, including Hepatitis B and Tetanus, which are being denied to us even though we regularly come in direct contact with bodily fluids including blood. These are luxury hospitals, why can't we get what we need?"

Cleaners and supporters will picket at a variety of Ministry of Justice and RBKC locations during the three strike days, and will be joined by Labour's Kensington MP Emma Dent Coad at their picket at RBKC on Tuesday 7 August.

• Donate to the strike fund:
<https://www.uvwunion.org.uk/current-campaigns>

Goldsmiths cleaners' strike

By a Goldsmiths student

Cleaners at Goldsmiths College, University of London, are campaigning with their union Unison, and the broader campaign Justice for Cleaners Goldsmiths, for their jobs to be brought in-house. Currently cleaning is outsourced to ISS but the contract is due to end in November.

In advance of that deadline the company has imposed a new contract on staff, worsening already poor conditions, cutting hours and wages. Complaints include lack of sick pay, holiday pay, pension entitlement and late payment of wages. None of the workers were consulted about the changes to their contract. It will involve changes in work patterns which will force many staff to leave.

One cleaner said: "I feel very demoralised as is my only source of income. This change will drastically affect my wages as I will lose 15 hours per week. Having an overall effect on my expenditure for my home. I have a daughter that I support and family overseas."

Hundreds of staff, academic and other, as well as students, have pledged support for the cleaners, but so far Goldsmiths have made no commitments.

• More cleaners' testimony:
<http://bit.ly/2AOBzBv>



Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 476 8 August 2018 50p/£1

Thousands march against National State Law

By Ira Berkovic

Tens of thousands of people, perhaps as many as 100,000, demonstrated in Tel Aviv on Saturday 4 August to protest against the new "Nation State Law", which opens the door to legally-sanctioned racism against non-Jews.

The law relegates Arabic from the status of official language, and asserts that "the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people". Israel's Arab minority, which makes up around 20% of the population, has formal legal equality, but faces frequent discrimination, which many fear the new law will intensify.

The Tel Aviv demonstration was led by Israel's Druze community, often referred to as Israel's "model minority" for their frequent patriotism and loyal military service (Arabs are exempt from conscription into the Israeli Defence Forces), who feel betrayed and let down by the law.

The passage of the law has provoked widespread opposition, including from many Jewish community organisations internationally. The Israeli establishment is itself divided over the question: speakers at the rally included a former head of Mossad, the Israeli secret service, and attendees included many former senior military figures. Even the current Israeli president Reuven Rivlin issued what appeared to be a subtle objection to the law, when he promised to sign it in Arabic.

The mass rally came days after thousands also attended another protest, billed as "the world's biggest Arabic lesson" in Tel Aviv, organised by a coalition of liberal and leftist organisations, including



Huge protests have taken place in Tel Aviv against the Nation State Bill

the cross-party "Standing Together" group, led by activists from left-wing parties such as Meretz and Hadash. One participant, a 16-year old Jewish student, told the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*: "Personally, I feel you can't have a democratic nation-state that doesn't treat minorities as fully equal".

Samah Salaime, an Arab activist who helped organise the event, said: "The law is symbolic, but this struggle is about building a shared country and a shared future in this land [...]"

"We are the binationalists, the bilinguals, we are the dream of the future [...] we have room for the Palestinian next to the Jews, for the Arab and the Israeli, and for anyone who defines themselves as part of this country [...] We are proud and are well aware of the price we pay for joining together. We do not stand behind a destructive coalition in the Knesset that takes our money for its institutions, its settlements, and its messianism."

Some Israeli leftists, such as Gush Shalom's Uri Avnery, who calls the Nation State Law "semi-fascist", situate it in the context of a wider lurch to the right, and against secularism.

POLICY

Avnery writes: "[There is] a rigorous government policy of Judaization of everything.

"The present government has reached new heights. Active — even frantic — government actions try to Judaize education, culture, even sports. Orthodox Jews, a small minority in Israel, exert immense influence. Their votes in the Knesset [the Israeli parliament] are essential to the Netanyahu government. [...]"

"Jews are members of an ethnic-religious people, dispersed throughout the world and belonging to many nations, with a strong feeling of affinity with Israel. We, in this country, belong to the Israeli nation, whose Hebrew members

are part of the Jewish people.

"It is crucial that we recognize this. It decides our outlook. Quite literally. Are we looking towards Jewish centres like New York, London, Paris and Berlin, or are we looking towards our neighbours, Damascus, Beirut, and Cairo? Are we part of a region inhabited by Arabs? Do we realise that making peace with these Arabs, and especially the Palestinians, is the main task of this generation?"

It is true, Netanyahu has made a conscious effort to align Israel with the growing ethno-nationalist far-right internationally, via close relations with Putin's Russia, Trump's USA, and Viktor Orban's Hungary.

He is aligning the world's only majority-Jewish state with governments led by, containing, or pandering to antisemites. Within his own government, figures like Avigdor Lieberman are virulent racists against the Palestinians, sometimes calling openly for ethnic cleansing.

Israel's historic self-presentation as a progressive, cosmopolitan, liberal democracy — always undermined by its occupation of the Palestinians — is now also undermined by its own social policies. Shortly before passing the Nation State Law, Netanyahu's government passed a bill preventing gay men from accessing state funds to have children via a surrogate mother.

Netanyahu, who previously pledged to support gay surrogacy, is widely seen to have caved in to the religious right, with which he now increasingly collaborates. This law also provoked mass demonstrations, with tens of thousands rallying in Tel Aviv on 22 July. On 2 August, 20,000 marched in the Jerusalem Pride parade, the highest number ever.

Writing in the Israeli socialist magazine *Challenge*, Yacov Ben-Efrat wrote that the demands of the LGBT movement "target the hearts and minds of Israeli society. They demand an egalitarian and democratic society when, in fact, their country favours the Jewish nation over the Arab nation, religious over secular."

However, he highlighted that "like the massive social protest of 2011, the [22 July] protest opposes a discriminatory society while omitting to oppose the discriminatory state. The omission seems contrived, especially considering that the Surrogacy Law excluding gay men passed in the Knesset on the same night as two strongly nationalistic laws, one against [left-wing NGO] 'Breaking the Silence' and the other, called the Nation-State Law, prioritising Jewishness over democracy.

"On one fateful night, the fundamentalist right realized its darkest desires."

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